

Media and Transition in central and eastern Europe  
A comparison between the German Democratic Republic and Hungary

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For my Father

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## List of Abbreviations

ADN	General German News Service (GDR)
AVH	Hungarian Secret Police: "State Protection Authority"
CDU	Christian Democratic Union (GDR)
CPSU CC	Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DBD	German Peasants' Party (GDR)
EKA	Round table of the opposition (Hungary)
FIDESZ	Alliance of Young Democrats (Hungary)
FKGP	Conservative Smallholders Party (Hungary)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party (Hungary)
KGB	Soviet Intelligence Service: "Committee for State Security"
KPD	German Communist Party
LDPD	Liberal Democratic Party (GDR)
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum
MDP	Hungarian (Communist) Worker's Party
MIT	Hungarian News Agency
MSZMP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party (Successor of the above in 1989)
NDPD	National Democratic Party of Germany (GDR)
NEM	New Economic Mechanism (Hungary)
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party
SED	Socialist Unity Party
SPD	Social Democrats (Germany)
SZDSZ	Alliance of Free Democrats (Hungary)

## **I. Introduction**

### **1. Problem outline**

It is today over seventeen years since the demise of communist power in Central and Eastern Europe. Since then, much work has been done analysing the process of democratic consolidation in the region, taking into account a wide variety of political, economical, social and institutional aspects of the transformation process. What appears remarkable, however, is that the role of the media in this transition has been hardly discussed. As stated by O'Neil: "Despite the fact that the recent spread of democracy has led to a commensurate amount of scholarly work on authoritarian collapse and democratization, little attention has been given to the media in this regard" (O'Neil, 1998, pg 3). While the importance of the media's political role has increasingly become subject to studies in the longer established democracies, especially the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany, with respect to Central- and Eastern Europe, an in depth analysis clearly lacks. As argued by Sparks: "The consequence of this lack of attention to the scope of recent developments is that the conceptual apparatus that we bring to the study of the media and democracy is seriously underdeveloped" (Sparks, 2001, pg 8). As a result, no theory exists to explain how the media change during and take effect on political transformations in the region.

Generally, Western social scientists agree that democracies depend on free media (O'Neil, 1997). "Democracy" in the modern senses of the word, is literally impossible without the media. It is a characteristic claim of democratic societies that they are democratic exactly due to them having both regular elections and a free media (Sparks , 1998). The media are considered the principle institutions from which members of the public can better understand their own society (McConnell, Becker, 2002). As argued by McConnell & Becker, "the media contribute to the public sphere by providing citizens with information about their world, by fostering debate about various issues and by encouraging informed decisions about available courses of action" (Ibid). Indeed, the media as the medium and as a part of "civil society" represents public opinions, social change, culture and politics. Additionally, in the region itself, the role and question of media independence has caused extensive dispute, which in several countries still persists. Freedom of speech and expression are regarded among the most important achievements of transformation in the countries of the region themselves (Tzankoff, 2001). Politicians, parties and societal actors during the transformation process had developed different strategies to take influence via the media.

The general lack of empirical research regarding the mutual relationship between the media and the process of democratization in the region of research therefore appears surprising and demands further investigation.

Both political scientists and communications researchers agree that the media and its journalists play some role in political processes in all societies. In relation to Central and Eastern Europe, as suggested by Sükösd, it is generally agreed that the media played a role in the breakdown of the Communist regimes in 1989-90 as well as in the far-reaching transformation of the region since then (Sükösd, 2000, pg 122). Existing academic literature on the subject, however, fundamentally disagrees on what exactly this role of the mass media was. There is debate about whether conditions need to be present, before the media can take influence, and if so what these conditions are. Obviously, these pre-conditions alone would already be part of the transformation process.

To be sure, already by definition it is extremely difficult for the media within a repressive regime to live up to the ideals of a media system in democratic societies (Randall, 1998). Nonetheless, as some general role of the media in the transformation process in Central and Eastern European countries is generally suggested, the question arising therefore, is what exactly this role was. Has the transformation process influenced free and independent media, or has the media influenced the transformation process? As brought up by O'Neil, if the media are so vital in consolidated democracies as is generally stated, acting as a watchdog and as a "fourth estate", can one then also assume that they play a role in undermining authoritarian rule? (O'Neil, 1998). While it is generally suggested that free media –and therefore free communication – is essential in a democracy, "the issue of whether mass media lead or follow change, whether they mirror or mold society, and whether they should be conceptualized as agents of change or of the status quo have yet to be resolved" (Jakubowicz, 2002, pg 203). It is exactly this unresolved question that this dissertation attempts to shed light into. It is a basic hypothesis of this dissertation that the media – in the final phase of the authoritarian rule – did indeed play a dominant part in undermining the system and in fostering alternative discussion. This hypothesis will be analysed through a comparison between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Hungary.

## **2. Level of research**

That the media influence society is nothing new. Already in 1963, Pye had argued that the media “in providing a new basis for understanding politics and for interpreting the realm of government, become involved in the most complex and psychologically intense problems of transitional societies” (Pye in Gross, 2002, pg 80). Nevertheless, until recently, literature on transformation in the region of research has to a great extent ignored the role of media and the media system in democratic transitions and consolidations. This goes for both literatures in political science as in communication sciences. With respect to Eastern Europe, no theory exists to explain how the media change during and take effect on political transformations. As argued by O’Neil, as academic analysis of the media have little to say about the role of press in transitional systems, at the same time, those academics who study authoritarian transitions and democratization tend not to do extensive research on the media as an important political variable (O’Neil, 1997 pg 3).

With regard to Communication science, as stated by Novosel, “communication scientists did not attempt to develop any sort of comprehensive theory or model with the specific aim of explaining and forecasting the downfall of nondemocratic regimes, that is, a theory that would look on these processes from the perspective of the communication variables – in interpersonal, group, or mass media channels” (Novosel, 1995, pg 10). In political sciences, even where the idea of the media is recognised as an important factor in the formation of political discourse, a “civil society” and the consolidation of a post-communist society, there is a clear lacking of further, thorough elaboration. Although a free press is taken as one of the “key pillars of democracy”, this concept is hardly developed any further (O’Neil, 1997).

Transition theory in Western social sciences has been heavily influenced by the four-volume landmark study “Transitions from Authoritarian rule” by Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter (1986). Even in this book, however, which has immeasurably broadened the understanding of political transitions, although suggesting that: “Usually, artists and intellectuals are the first to manifest public opposition to authoritarian rule, often before the transition has been launched” (O’Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pg 49) the media and its journalists as such are never mentioned (O’Neil, 1998). As quoted by Mughan and Gunther: “The state of research on media effects is one of the most notable embarrassments of modern social science” (Gunther & Mughan, 2000, pg 1). This although, as argued by Voltmer & Schmitt-Beck, “democratic consolidation is a complex process with many dimensions, one of the most crucial being the establishment of



widespread popular support. Since citizens' experience with their political system is to a large extent a mediated experience, the mass media that fulfil this function of mediation become of decisive importance" (Schmitt-Beck & Voltmer, 2002 pg 2). Additionally, the Media –often referred to as the fourth power within the state- has a unique position within the democratic self-understanding. As argued by Mughan and Gunther, "the mass communications media are the connective tissue of democracy" (Gunther & Mughan, 2000, pg 1). Thus, it is fair to say that although the academic research of democratization has advanced significantly since regime change began with the simultaneous collapse of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, the role of the media in this change was treated with tremendous neglect.

While there exists a general consensus among academics that the media are part of social change in Central and Eastern Europe, suggesting that free and independent media are necessary for the functioning of democracy, analysis going beyond this basic notion – analysing in what ways the media may foster or impede democratization – clearly fails. There seems to lack empirical evidence on how fundamentally the media has an impact on democracy, especially with respect to Eastern Europe. Research on the relationship between the media and democratization disagree on what actually the role of the media during the democratization process is.

Is the media a component of democracy, or is it rather a necessary step towards democracy? Do the media lead or follow society? Are the media agents of change or do they simply mirror what is happening in society?

Commonly, the literature that does exist on the topic in general, suggests four different positions in relation to the role of the media in democratization processes:

1. The "Media-supremist position", arguing that free and independent media generate democracy. This position has found its advocates in the work of the "Toronto School" (Innis, 1951; McLuhan, 1962). It stresses the means of communication as a force for change. There exist stronger and weaker versions of the "media-supremist position" (McQuail, 1992). However, generally this position sees media as decisive in the struggle for power in all regimes, including non-democratic regimes. Accordingly, media of all types are believed to assist the struggle that emerges between political movements and the authoritarian state in the process of regime change, and continues through the transition stage into the consolidation stage, with whatever regime emerges (McConnell & Becker, July 2002).
2. The "democracy-supremist" position, suggesting that democratic reform determines and produces media freedom and independence. It argues the dependence of the

media on other forces in society, especially those of politics and money (McQuail, 1992). Also here some recognise a casual influence to some media in some cases for some social institutions, without rejecting a general view of media as ultimately being dependent on society (Ibid).

3. The “media-is-an-element-of-democracy” position (connected to position 2), which argues that the media and its freedom are simply an outcome of democracy and, as such, have no part in actively fostering democracy (McConnel & Becker, July 2002).
4. The “null-effect” position, claiming that there is no relationship between the media and democracy (McConnel & Becker, 2002).

Although not often mentioned, further literature presents two alternative positions, namely:

5. A media-freedom-hinders-democracy position (Ette, 2000). Ette for example suggests that in the case of Nigeria, the media undermined democracy, and argues: “it is not even clear the press has a common understanding of how it should serve the cause of democracy” (Ibid).
6. A democratization hinders-media-freedom argument (McConnel & Becker, July 2002). Here the argument goes, that as democratization takes place, media regulation that evolves during this process restrict media freedoms. For example, in Serbia, following the collapse of the regime, no real regulation of the broadcast media existed. During the process of democratization, regulation concerning media licensing became more restrictive and this limited the possibilities of the media system to take influence.

Randall argues a “stage-ist” approach, suggesting that it is necessary to consider the role of the media under the previous regime, as that will impact the media’s rate of evolution toward independence and its ability to act as a credible force during the transition and consolidation phases. Additionally, during the different phases the media may have different roles. For example, during the immediate phase of transition, the media appear to be most supportive of democracy, which often declines thereafter (Randall, 1998, quoted in McConnel & Becker, July 2002).

As one can indeed argue some form of co-variation between media and democracy, position four usually does not receive much attention. Existing literature, therefore, tends to suggest that in all Central and Eastern European countries, there indeed exists at least some form of relationship between the media and democratization (Thomas & Tzankoff,

2001). This dissertation supports the view that the media do contribute to the transformation and subsequent consolidation of democracy.

The level of research in relation to the national media in the GDR is very different to that of Hungary. With reference to the GDR, an emphasis is usually put on the role of West German media on the formation of political opinions. Indeed, the national media of the GDR probably receives the least attention in any analysis of the media in Eastern and Central Europe (Dennis & vanden Heuvel, 1990). This mainly results out of two reasons. Firstly, the media in the GDR until 1989 was regarded as being one of the most strongly controlled by the political elite in all of the soviet bloc countries, as a result of which the role of the West German media is regarded as more important. The electronic media of the FRG –having the same language and being available in most of the GDR – offered a good alternative as an information and entertainment source to the GDR citizens.

Secondly, the GDR as a country ceased to exist after 1990, when the GDR in comparison to other former communist countries of the region underwent an enormous leap, overnight becoming part of a consolidated west European democracy.

With respect to the GDR a far-reaching analysis has been published by Arnulf Kutsch (ed) “Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR” (1990). Although successfully summarizing the developments inside the East-German Media in 1989, suggesting how the media reacted to changes inside the system, nevertheless, an in depth analysis on how exactly the media influenced the democratization process remains unresolved. The publication manages quite well to portray the output of the media during and following the collapse of the regime. It manages less, however, in portraying the outcome of the medias actions during this collapse for the democratization process.

In the case of Hungary, much more literature on the topic exists (see Dawisha & Parrott, 1997; Gross, 2002; Gunther & Mughan, 2000; O’Neil, 1997; Price, Rozumilowicz & Verhulst, 2002; Thomas & Tzankoff, , 2001). Reference here, however, is usually made to the media as an institution analysing how this as such has transformed during the democratization process. Overall, analysis of what influence the media had on any political and social transformation still clearly lacks.

An extensive attempt to integrate existing literature on the topic has been conducted by Price, Rozumilowicz and Verhulst (2002). The aim of their research was to analyse “the impact of political transitions on media structures and the impact of changing media structures on political reform” (Price, Rozumilowicz & Verhulst 2002, pg 1). They chose

several case studies including Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Poland in order to receive empirical evidence on the relationship between the media and democratization. Nonetheless, the analysis is successful in bringing evidence about media reform, but much less successful in suggesting a link between the media freedom and reform and political change (McConnell & Becker, 2002).

Patrick O'Neil, who extensively discusses the relationship between the Media in Eastern Europe and democratic transition, has conducted further far-reaching work on the topic. In his research, together with American and East European scholars, his works outline how the specific influence of the media has led to democratic consolidations in the region. While this analysis, however, successfully addresses the topic, the relatively large amount of countries studied hinders a deeper analysis of each country on its own. The same goes for a publication by Gunther & Mughan (2000). Their book "Democracy and the Media: A comparative Perspective" offers a collection of essays by prominent scholars on the impacts of politics on the media, and of the media on politics, in authoritarian, transitional, and democratic regimes in various countries including Russia, Hungary, Germany and the United States. Especially the text by Sükösd offers valuable insight into the position and changes within the media from Stalinism to democratization In Hungary. The overall conclusion of the publication suggests that media liberalization is a necessary prerequisite for successful democratization. The editors, however, stress that "it would be unwarranted to jump to the conclusion that the freer the media from government regulation and the more they are embedded in a market economy, the stronger their contribution to the quality of democracy" (Gunther & Mughan, 2000, pg 402).

In both works the GDR and the role of its media on the transformation process is barely mentioned. Although both works address the role of the Media in Hungary, empirical analysis clearly lacks.

„Medien und Transformation in Osteuropa“ by Thomas & Tzankoff, (2001) addresses the clear lacking of empirical analysis on the subject. The book identifies several well-known books analysing the process of democratic transformations, stating that the role of the Media in societal change is neither addressed in country studies nor in theoretical analyses. *“Die Rolle der Medien bei dem gesellschaftlichen Wandel kommt weder in den Länderstudien noch in den theoriegeleiteten Analysen vor”* (Tzankoff, 2001 pg 9). While arguing, however, that in all countries of central and eastern Europe bar the Czech Republic, at different stages of the democratization process the media may indeed be regarded as a motor of Transformation (Thomas & Tzankoff, 2001 pg 249), an in depth empirical analysis remains out.

“Glasnost and after: Media and change in Central and Eastern Europe” edited by Paletz, Jakubowicz, & Novosel (1995) is an additional work with in depth analysis of the role of the media in Eastern Europe. While the chapter of Robinson “East-Germany” (1995) addresses issues of media democratization, discussing how the media as such transformed and democratized after 1989, it is less successful in discussing the role and influence of the media on the process of democratization. The chapter by Jakubowicz “The Media as agents of Change” successfully addresses the issue of media influence on the transformation process. Although arguing that it “would be hard to develop a hierarchy of agents of change” (Jakubowicz, 1995, pg 42) at the same time, Jakubowicz states that the media may to an extent be seen as “central to the process of change in Central and Eastern Europe- a crucial catalyst of change, in both a positive and negative sense” (Jakubowicz, 1995, pg 43). The chapter attempts to analyse the role of the media in a vast number of countries of the region, but lacks in depth analysis.

In sum existing literature often contradicts itself, leaving many unanswered questions as to the relationship between the media and democracy in the area of research. As argued by O’Neil, “where media systems are emerging from a long period of authoritarianism, as in Eastern Europe, what impact media structures in transition have on the new political order, and vice versa, requires further investigation”. (O’Neil, 1997, pg3)

Existing literature on the GDR and Hungary suggests a very different traditional picture of the national media of the respective countries prior to the systems demise. While in the GDR the media were heavily controlled, overwhelmingly regarded as the mouthpiece of the communist party, the media in Hungary enjoyed considerable freedom, often openly criticising the regime a considerable time before the system was in a state of collapse. This opening of the media in Hungary had already begun after the disastrous events of 1956, after which János Kádár brought Hungary on the path of “Goulash Communism” (O’Neil, 1997 pg 83), a term used to describe Hungary’s high degree of reformist pragmatism and comparably high liberties given to the people (Ibid). As a result of the comparably honest reporting of the media and its at times critical questioning of some regime decisions, while in the GDR the people viewed the national media as an instrument of communist propaganda, in Hungary the people had a stronger trust in the national media which, arguably, gave the media a positive role in fostering political discourse and in creating public opinions (Sükösd, 2000).

It seems that in Hungary, as opposed to the GDR, the journalists had a stronger self-standard in what they were writing, only to an extent prepared to follow state propaganda no matter how ridiculous it was. In Hungary, as argued by Sükösd, this came as after 1963 many intellectuals involved in the 1956 uprising became decision makers within the media system, slowly beginning to liberalize their respective fields from the inside. The fact that these had been active in 1956, gave them considerable credibility in the eyes of many Hungarians. Sükösd suggests that by beginning to address previously taboo topics, these intellectuals then positively affected the democratization process by actively disseminating democratic values and concepts (Ibid). Bit by bit these journalists managed to increase their room to act independently, furthering the limits set by the censor.

Indeed, as argued by Lanczi and O'Neil, in Hungary, the media were less strictly controlled than elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe, allowing broader scope for discourse (O'Neil, 1997). This situation of relative freedom became even bigger with the process of privatization of the print media beginning already in 1988 –bringing the involvement of mostly Western European publishers. The literature on the subject suggests that the process of privatization positively affected transition by allowing the journalists to engage in political debate even more openly, as the media content was influenced by commercial thinking. Although the Hungarian journalists often supported communism, many believed in the need of political, social and economical reform. This influenced them in addressing sometimes long overdue discussions on political reform and thus initiating a debate both within society but also among the party elite.

Existing literature on the GDR on the other hand suggests that the system represented the traditional Stalinist picture of the media in an East European communist state, where all media served as the central organ of communication of the one party-state, attempting to use the media in order to reinforce political control. Many in the GDR were therefore heavily critical about their own media. Although often attempting to voice critical thoughts, the journalists had to do this through indirect words, or “between the lines”. As a result, as suggested by Robinson (1995), the people of the GDR came to rely on West German media especially since the mid-1980s (particularly TV and Radio in the form of the ARD, ZDF and RIAS-Radio).

### 3. Hypotheses

It has therefore so far been established that although a great deal of literature on transformations in the area of research exists, little extensive work has been conducted as to the specific role of the media in these transformation processes. Taken this surprising lack of research on the topic, this dissertation proceeds from the question of what role exactly the media played during the transformation processes of Central and Eastern Europe. Here, the main hypothesis of this dissertation is:

Where the media was able to play a relatively independent role from the outset of the democratization process in Central and Eastern Europe, as a result, during the immediate phase of change, the media can indeed be seen as a *“motor of change”*.

Thus: if independent, the media were able to contribute positively to the transformation process, acting as a catalyst and exponent of change, offering a platform for discussion and thus fostering alternative views and critical debate. The dissertation presumes that liberalization of the respective regimes had to be present before the media could act independently, and that in Hungary this liberalization occurred before it occurred in the GDR. This dissertation, however, presumes that once the grip of the old system began to erode, the press also in the GDR began to assume more liberties and in this could foster the further process of transformation. Once liberalization began, the press in both Hungary and the GDR supported the democratization process in mainly two ways:

1. Through the “democratic agenda setting” function (telling the readers not what to think but what to think about) (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), the media broke on previously taboo topics, defining social and political issues as being important, creating a context that supports the readers to order and understand the political world (Sükösd, 2000) as well as informing the public on what political and economical alternatives exist.

2. Building up on the “democratic agenda setting” function, in both the GDR and Hungary the press became a platform for societal / opposition groups, in which a variety of alternative views could be discussed and critical discourse carried out. By becoming the mouthpiece and platform of society, voicing alternative political ideas and fostering critical debate by bringing up previously taboo topics, the media positively affected the process of democratization.

Thus: where more liberties allowed the press to act more freely, the greater the speed and success of democratization.

Additionally, this dissertation presumes a differentiation between the role of the media as

an institution as well the role of the journalists.

1. The media as an institution part of the ruling regime could positively affect the transformation process by opposing the status quo, and by offering a platform for various ideas, politicians and topics to be discussed.

2. The journalists positively affected the democratization process by fostering an internal pluralism, by presenting alternative ideas and parties, as well as by critically articulating previously taboo topics and informing the public on what alternatives exists. Similar to the rest of the ruling regime, the “Media” employees were made up of hard- and softliners.

As to the analysis of what factors influenced the media and its journalists in assuming the above-mentioned role, this dissertation presumes twofold reasoning.

1. As the spirit of Glasnost was influencing events throughout the entire region a great number of journalists realized that change also in their country was inevitable, and to a great deal wanted a change to come. Being so close to the politburo, especially the leading journalists noticed that change was looming long before this became apparent to the majority of the citizens. What is important to note, however, is that while this dissertation presumes that most Journalists wanted a reform of the current system, it also presumes that most did not want to do away with the socialist system per se. Instead, many were reform communists, envisioning a socialist style system as Alexander Dubček had stood for, and most did not immediately want to foster a process towards a multi-party system.

2. The disintegration of the party state system which had fully paid for the media system up to then, led to a new economic reality which the journalists and the individual media had to adapt to. To this belonged a market orientated thinking, in which the media became a product that needed to be sold. This ultimately heavily influenced the choice of topics covered by the media. As the media had to make their topics interesting in order that people continue to consume their product, it no longer sufficed to simply write what the politburo wanted. Thus, it was this beginning of a commercialization of the media that this dissertation presumes developed step by step in 1989, which then in turn directly influenced a more pluralistic, critical media in both countries of research.



#### **4. Methodical approach**

This dissertation attempts to further the insight on the role of the media in the transformation processes of Central and Eastern Europe. If the hypothesis holds true, then the media will have a comparably equal impact on the transformation process of each respective country, no matter how these processes are initiated and no matter how different the forms of socialism had been prior to the systems demise. In order to analyse whether indeed this premises is true, the logical point of departure seemed to analyse two countries in the area of research that represented two completely different modes of transition and which represented two very different forms of state socialism by 1989. The choice of countries therefore fell on the GDR and Hungary, as the systems of these two indeed represented different modes of transition and models of state socialism, which also reflected the amount of media autonomy in the respective countries by 1989. Thus, the choice of countries follows the model of the „Most different Systems Design“ (Przeworski/Teune 1970). Thus, if it can be portrayed by this dissertation that the media did indeed have an impact on the democratization processes in both countries, then - through this design - one can also assume that the media in the entire region of research played a similar role. This form of analysis also allows a conclusion as to the differences on the role of the media as a result of different transition and system preconditions.

Additionally, aim of the choice of newspapers for the content analysis was to chose and compare two official, originally statelly influenced newspapers with strong circulation in each country, one the direct organ of the respective regime, the other more reformist. The choice of newspapers to be analysed within both countries of research therefore also follows the „Most different Systems Design“. This was done in order to investigate whether the positive role of the media – that this dissertation presumes – was evident no matter how strictly controlled by the regime the respective newspaper was directly prior to the beginning of the transition processes. Furthermore, one premises of this dissertation is that shortly before the systems demise, the respective media systems witnessed a growing commercialization; and that this in turn led to an increasingly competitive environment which directly influenced the various media to assume a more critical and positive role. As the direct party organs usually faced less direct economic pressures, if the reform papers and these party organs were then both affected by this growing commercialization, then the premise seems to hold true generally.

In the case of the GDR the choice fell on “Neue Zeit” and “Neues Deutschland” and in Hungary on “Népszabadság” and “Magyar Nemzet”. The names of both “Népszabadság”

and “Neues Deutschland” until today stand for the old communist era, both being the official newspapers of the communist parties (See Kutsch, 1990 for the GDR; O’Neil, 1997 for Hungary). In the case of the “Neues Deutschland” it was not only the party newspaper, but also more importantly the direct organ and thus mouthpiece of the party central committee, as was stated in its header: *“Organ des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartie Deutschlands”*.

The “Neue Zeit” and “Magyar Nemzet” represented a more reform-orientated coverage (Ibid). Before the collapse of communism, “Magyar Nemzet” was regarded as being the mouthpiece for the “Popular Front” groups (“Hazafias Népfront”: sometimes also referred to as “Patriotic front” or “National front of patriots”), which were led by the reform communist politburo member (and later key player in the democratization process) Imre Pozsgay. In 1989 it became the platform for party softliners (in particular the party reform circles) demanding reforms towards a democratization of party and state. The “Neue Zeit” was regarded as being the mouthpiece of the GDR Block-party CDU. Together with the mouthpiece of the Block-party LDPD “Der Morgen”, the “Neue Zeit” in 1989, began to demand more autonomy and to oppose the status quo (Kutsch, 1990). This owed to a great extent that they belonged to block parties, who once the SED was losing its control, began to position themselves as opposition forces in an increasingly possible multi-party system. For example, when the GDR opposition group “Neues Forum” received permission to officially register as a political union, these two newspapers offered the “Neues Forum” to publish their documents and information, as the group did not yet have a publication of its own. With this, these newspapers took the initiative to become a public platform for critical discourse.

The “Neues Deutschland” during the time of analysis had a circulation of approximately 1.1 million copies. Although the “Neue Zeit” only had a circulation of 125.000 in 1989, the dissertation will concentrate on this publication nonetheless. This as other newspapers with greater circulation, which did not follow the socialist idealism as strongly as did the “Neues Deutschland”, such as the “Berliner Zeitung”, nevertheless remained under stricter SED dominance until the very end. Thus, a comparative analysis of these newspapers with the “Neues Deutschland” might not lead to any meaningful divergence. The “Neue Zeit” and “Der Morgen” both represented the strongest national-wide regime critical newspapers (within the existing possibilities). This dissertation concentrates on the “Neue Zeit” as it had a greater circulation of the two.

The “Népszabadság” literally meaning “People’s Freedom”, in 1989 had a circulation of 460.000 copies (according to “Népszabadság” statements). Today, it remains the largest quality daily newspaper with 198.000 copies. The “Magyar Nemzet”, meaning “Hungarian Nation”, in 1989 had a circulation of 132.000 copies (according to “Magyar Nemzet” statements). Today it stands at 93.000, representing the second largest quality daily newspaper.

The concentration of this dissertation therefore lies on the official print media in the region of research, leaving out underground media, foreign media as well as electronic media. This as electronic media (especially radio and in the case of the GDR also TV) that were frequently used in the respective countries were often foreign. This distorts the role of the national media and journalists. Additionally, the TV was usually controlled more heavily than were newspapers. Although underground media surely had an impact on society, these publications simply did not have the means to reach as many readers as did the official media.

The problem outline identified that existing literature on the role of the media in the transition in Central and Eastern European countries clearly fail in delivering empirical evidence on what impact the media had on democratization in the region. In order to empirically analyse this research question, and taking into account the problems of the electronic and foreign media just mentioned, a comparative analysis of the official national press appeared the logical approach.

The emphasis of the methodical approach was:

1. A content analysis of selected print media in Hungary and the German Democratic Republic.
2. A main pillar of research is interviews with contemporary witnesses, especially opposition activists of the time, former members of the ruling regime, journalists, as well as scholars.

Additionally, the dissertation relies on primary and secondary background literature as well as a qualitative analysis of documents. The findings of the comparative analysis of the newspapers, the conclusions of the interviews as well as a qualitative analysis of literature should give insight into the question of whether indeed a relationship exists between the media and democratization. If the journalists in their attitudes and actions opposed the status quo, and if these actions proved helpful in fostering the democratization process,

then one firstly needs to find out whether indeed the journalists did set out to oppose the status quo and to support the transformation process and secondly whether this in turn had an effect on the process.

The dissertation therefore divides these two into firstly an “output” (journalists/media intent) and secondly an “outcome” (effect on the process) analysis. For this reason the approach was to conduct a content analysis, interviews with contemporary witnesses, a qualitative analysis of documents and further literature, and to subsequently compare these with each other. This is done as firstly, through the research of the newspapers one can analyse to what extent the press were articulating opposition views, alternative ideas, mentioning opposition groups and trying to foster critical debate in society. Part of the interviews should give additional insight into the agendas of the journalists. However, even if the press were adhering to all the just mentioned points, it would alone not suffice to argue that the media indeed did have an influence on the democratization process. It does not answer the question set in the problem outline of whether the media led or followed society. Even if the media did articulate all of these points, it may still be following the process instead of influencing it. Out of this reason the findings of the content analysis of the newspapers shall be compared to interviews with contemporary witnesses, confirming what the journalists said and stating whether and to what extent indeed the “output” of the newspapers were useful for the transformation process and the emerging oppositions cause. This should also be supported by background information and documents of the time.

The hypotheses had identified the “democratic agenda setting” (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) as an important role of the press. If this argument holds true, then one must be able to identify whether what the press wrote about was then subsequently also picked up on and discussed in society and the opposition groups. Only if the media began assuming the role of opposing the status quo –which the content analysis as well as the interviews should give insight to – and at the same time this was reflected in what was being discussed in society and demanded by opposition actors/groups, can one argue that the media indeed had an influence in terms of “agenda-setting”. The same goes for offering oppositional groups and ideas a platform.

The time of analysis for Hungary begins on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1989, after the statement of the politburo member Imre Pozsgay that the events of 1956 had been a popular uprising. In the GDR the time of analysis begins in May 1989, after the flawed elections had been held. Both cases represent a key point in the demise of the respective regimes.

The analysis' both end in March 1990 with the first free elections in the GDR and in Hungary since the communist takeovers of power in the respective countries: in the GDR on March 18<sup>th</sup> and in Hungary on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1990.

The conduction of interviews followed two different approaches, one being personal interviews, the second interview by phone or in writing. Where possible a personal interview was preferred. This was successful for most interviews; however, certain interview partners preferred an interview via telephone or in writing. The choice of interview partners for both countries followed the same approach: aim was to conduct interviews with journalists working in the respective countries during the time of research; members of the forming civil rights groups and opposition groups (in the case of the GDR this also includes reform members of the block parties); as well as reform members of the former socialist parties (in the GDR the SED as of December 1989 the SED-PDS; and in Hungary the MSZMP as of September 1989 the MSZP). In the case of the GDR the dissertation also used two interviews with the former Chief-editor as well as deputy- editor of the Neues Deutschland, which were conducted in 2005 (see Interviews Cierpka, 2005).

The interviews for the GDR were:

**Journalists:**

1. **Rainer Höhling.** Mr. Höhling worked for the AND during the time of research, and is currently deputy-chief editor at the "Deutscher Depeschendienst" (ddp). His interview gave valuable insight as to the working mode of the media system during the time, the agendas of the media and its journalists as well as the way these responded to the unfolding events and the changing economic working mode of the entire media system.
2. **Wolfgang Spickermann.** As of 1989, Mr. Spickermann became Chief-Editor of the "Neues Deutschland", against the initial will of Egon Krenz and Günter Schabowski. His comments help to understand how the media system was built up during the GDR, how the journalists witnessed the unfolding changes, when they noticed that these were taking place and above all, how they reacted. Additionally, his comments shed light into the question of how the changing economic reality affected the working of the press. (Interviews Cierpka)
3. **Michael Müller.** Mr. Müller was editor in the "Neues Deutschland" in 1989, and became deputy Chief-editor under Spickermann. His comments helped to compare and support those made by Spickermann and to give further insight into the same topics. (Interviews Cierpka)
4. **Dr. Monika Zimmermann.** During the time of research, Dr. Zimmermann was one of the few accredited west-German journalists inside the GDR. In 1990 she

became Chief-editor of the “Neue Zeit”. Dr. Zimmermann is currently the government spokeswoman of the state of Saxony-Anhalt. Being inside the GDR as a foreign correspondent, Dr. Zimmermann gave significant insight into the GDR's media system and journalists, and her observations helped to gain a better understanding on how the media system reacted to the changes. Furthermore, taking over as Chief-Editor of the “Neue Zeit”, Dr. Zimmermann's comments helped to understand how the transformation took place inside the newspaper and how the paper and its journalists reacted to the changing market-orientated working mode.

### **Opposition activists:**

5. **Elke Bötcher.** Ms. Bötcher became a member of the group “*Bündniss 90*”, which later merged with the West-German Greens to form the party “*Bündniss 90/ Die Grünen*”. Her comments give a valuable understanding on how the East-German media was perceived by the masses and from where these masses and opposition groups took their information (i.e. Western News or News from the GDR), and how this changed over time. Additionally, her comments help understand how the media supported the work of the emerging opposition.
6. **Siegfried Reiprich.** Mr. Reiprich was a founder of the oppositional group “*Arbeitskreises Literatur und Lyrik*” in Jena, which became a dominant group in the youth culture movement of the GDR at the end of the 1970s. In 1981, he and his wife were forced to leave the GDR and moved to West Berlin. Mr. Reiprich is currently deputy-Director of the memorial place “*Berlin-Hohenschönhausen*”. Apart from giving an understanding on the role of the media in the GDR, how this supported the emerging opposition groups and how this changed over time, his interview is especially helpful in understanding what role the Block parties played inside the GDR, and why people joined these groups. Thus, it suggests why these Block parties so quickly became opposition parties to the SED in 1989.
7. **Wolfgang Thierse.** Mr. Thierse, who had worked for the Ministry of Cultural affairs of the GDR, became a member of the “*Neues Forum*” in 1989 and a member of the East-German SPD in 1990, where he became its Chairman until September 1990. Following the elections of March 1990, Mr. Thierse became a member of the “*Volkskammer*” until unification with the FRG. Since October 1990, Mr. Thierse is a SPD member of the German Parliament; from 1998 to 2005 President and from 2005 onwards vice-President of the German Parliament. Mr. Thierse's interview gives insight into the role of the media and its journalists during the GDR, and as of

when a more critical and independent reporting could be observed from the opposition's perspective.

8. **Arnold Vaatz.** In 1989, Mr. Vaatz was a member of the opposition group "*Gruppe 20*" and became a member of the "*Neues Forum*" and later its press-spokesperson. Since 1990, Mr. Vaatz is a member of the CDU in Dresden, and since 1998 is a CDU member of the German parliament. The interview of Mr. Vaatz gives important insight on the way the media had already previously written "between the lines" and how some newspapers became an orientation point for the developing opposition groups, offering them the possibility to voice their agendas and directly supporting their causes. Additionally, his comments help to understand how the block-parties used the media to position themselves as opposition groups against the SED, but also how the respective media and their journalists at times fostered an internal block-party democratization process.

The interviews for Hungary were:

**Journalists:**

1. **András Heltai-Hopp.** In 1989 Mr. Heltai-Hopp was correspondent of the MTI in the USA. He is currently deputy-Chief-editor of the German speaking newspaper "*Pester Lloyd*" in Budapest. His comments help to understand the Hungarian media system and its gradual liberalization from the 1960s onwards. Additionally, he helped to understand why *Samizdat* literature had never managed to become so popular in Hungary and what effect the privatisations and changing economic reality had on the journalistic work and output.
2. **Ivan Lipovecz.** Mr. Lipovecz was journalist and editor of the magazine "*HVG*" in 1989. Being the editor of one of the magazines that were privatised early on, his comments give insight into the way the privatizations took place. Furthermore, his interview also helps to understand the liberalization process in Hungary since the amnesty of the 1960s, and what affect this had on the media system. Additionally, his comments shed light into the perceived agenda of the journalists working at the time.
3. **Ferenc Pach.** Mr. Pach was correspondent of the MTI in the GDR during the time of analysis. Mr. Pach is currently news director of the MTI in Budapest. His interview sheds light into the media system of Hungary during the time of analysis. Furthermore, he explains the gradual liberalisation of society since the 1960s, and what affect this had on the working mode of the media and the journalists. Being

inside the GDR in 1989, his comments also support a comparison between the two countries as well as specifically what happened inside the GDR.

#### **Reform orientated Regime member:**

4. **Dr. Zoltán Szabó.** Dr. Szabó was member of the Communist, Hungarian Socialist Workers Party in 1989. He was a founder of one of the most radical inner party reform circles, the “Budapest-Circle”. Since 1990, Dr. Szabó is a Member of Parliament for the Socialist party. His comments shed light into how the reform forces within the party began to directly instruct the media to begin a more critical stance in 1989, how they used the media to make their positions public, and how the reform forces eventually lost “control” of the media previously under their influence. Additionally, his comments explain how the reform movement within the party eventually split up itself during the later part of 1989.

#### **Opposition activists**

5. **Dr. Tamás Deutsch-Für.** Dr. Deutsch-Für was a founding member of the opposition group FIDESZ. He is a Member of the Hungarian Parliament for the FIDESZ, and between 1998-2002 he served as Minister for Sports. His comments offer valuable insight into the establishment of FIDESZ as a movement as well as what strategies the FIDESZ took to gain media coverage. Above all, his comments give an understanding on how important media coverage was for the emerging opposition groups, and how it helped to make themselves, their programmes and people public.
6. **Dr. József Kajdi.** Between April 1986 to May 1990 Dr. Kajdi worked for the Hungarian Justice Ministry. Between 1990 to 1994, he was Head of the Prime Ministers Office (Under two MDF Prime Ministers) and State-Secretary for public administration. His interview gives an understanding on the media system in Hungary, as well as of when the media began to cover the emerging opposition movements and programmes. Additionally, his comments provide valuable insight into the consequences of the privatization measures at the end of the 1980s as well as the changing economic reality.

#### **Academics:**

7. **Dr. Miklos Sükösd.** Dr. Sükösd is currently lecturer at the Department of Political Sciences, at the Central European University, Budapest. His various publications on the position of the media during state socialism as well as on the position of the media during the transformation process in Hungary, serve as in depth source for



this dissertation; hence, the interview provided the opportunity for further precise questions on topics requiring additional elaboration. These topics included the amnesty of the 1960s, the position of journalists within the system as well as the way in which the media and especially the individual journalists gradually emerged as independent actors.

8. **Zoltan Kiszelly.** Mr. Kiszelly is lecturer at the Central European University, Budapest. Due to his academic studies on the dissertation subject as well as his closeness to the MDF, the interview offered helpful insight into the Hungarian media system at the end of the 1980s as well as its gradual liberalisation. Additionally, his comments offer an understanding of what effects the amnesty of the 1960s had on the media system and the role of the media in society, as well as the gradual development of the media and the journalists into independent actors.

## **5. Dissertation setup**

In order to discuss the role of the media during the democratization process, it makes sense to look at the political, social and economic conditions in which the media worked and could influence the respective countries. Out of this reason the dissertation begins by examining the imposition of communism over the region of research after 1945; its influence over the working mode of the media, the divergent paths the forms of socialism took over the years until 1989, as well as the influence these divergent paths in turn had on the respective media systems. This is important if one wants to understand why the respective media found different pre-conditions to influence the democratization processes and what influence the media indeed had.

In the next step the dissertation analyses how the respective media acted in 1989; did they initiate or rather re-act to the unfolding developments? This is done by analysing the transition of the media in 1989; by comparing how the respective newspapers changed and what they did during the time of research (output) to what was happening socially and politically. The next step then is a comparison of the newspapers with each other. This comparison is firstly done between the two newspapers of research in each country, and then in a second step between the countries of research. The role of the media during the democratization process in each country of research as well as in comparison to each other is then examined through interview statements and literature findings, in order to

investigate whether the “output” did indeed have an “outcome” effect? This in turn leads to the conclusions and final remarks.

## **II. Analytical approach**

The wave of democratization that swept across the Soviet sphere of influence at the end of the 1980s was remarkable in a number of respects. The most striking appears to be the rapidity of events that unfolded, and the fact that it was so little anticipated by observers at the time. Considerable political changes had been taking place in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1980s: beginning with the roundtable negotiations in Poland, in Hungary political, social and economic reforms and most notably the changes occurring within the Soviet Union itself. As argued by Ekiert, while there had been cases of political instability since the forceful imposition of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, which represented a crisis in state-socialism, the developments after the late 1970s can best be described as a “crisis of state-socialism” (Ekiert, 1991 pg 286). Nonetheless, communist elites and western observers alike had not expected that these changes would actually lead to the breakdown of the systems of the respective countries in the near future. Rather, a slow process of democratization was imagined. In an article investigating whether more countries would become democratic, Samuel Huntington in 1984 had concluded that it was less likely that democratization would occur in Eastern Europe than elsewhere in the world (Huntington, 1984, quoted in Pridham & Vanhanen, 1994, pg 1). As pointed out by McSweeney & Tempest, in the mid-1980s even “the agenda of many dissidents within Eastern Europe was for liberalization of communist systems rather than their overthrow or dismantlement” (McSweeney & Tempest, 1993, pg 412).

With hindsight, it becomes clear that the socialist party states faced demise, but by the end of the 1980s this was by no means obvious. As stated by Andrew Walder: “Economic inefficiency, consumer deprivation, and housing shortages were well evident in these societies for decades. The official ideology of these regimes was long met with public indifference and private derision. The party apparatus was for decades operated as a collection of local political machines founded upon venality and patronage. Beginning as early as the mid-1950s, observers noticed a gradual enlargement of tolerated private spheres of independent intellectual and political discourse.....While today we can look back upon an inexorable cumulative crisis, a few years ago one could just as easily be struck by how little all these deeply rooted problems seemed to shake these stable and stagnant regimes” (Walder, 1994, quoted in Sharman, 2003, pg 127). The sudden and

complete changes that then unfolded left political scientists with the challenge to explore the reasons and patterns for these events.

The transitions in Central and Eastern Europe all had comparable elements (Dale, 2006, pg 8). Each was marked by a rapid disintegration of existing political institutions, by the “aggravation of economic dislocations”, by the propagation of political movements that entered the political arena and by “the establishment of transitory power arrangements in which opposition forces acquired varying degrees of access to the official political processes” (Ekiert, 1991, pg 287). Nonetheless, the differences in modes of transition cannot be disregarded.

Literature on the topic suggests that the term “democratization” is a relatively loose phrase to describe what is happening, although it is generally agreed that the outcome is the formation of a liberal or constitutional democracy on the basis of western democratic models (Pridham & Vanhanen, 1994). According to O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), the transformation process can be broken down into three distinctive phases: 1. Liberalization; 2. Institutionalization of democracy (democratization); and 3. consolidation of democracy. Existing literature suggests that the differentiation between these three phases is only an ideal model. This as the process of democratization does not always move in a single direction. The process starts and stops, with setbacks during some phases of the process. The initiation of each phase does not assure the transition to political democracy. Under some circumstances, they may foster the process. However, as argued by Linz, the liberalization phase for example can also “lead to a crisis involving growing repression and perhaps ultimately a violent overthrow that will make democratization more difficult” (Linz, 1990, pg 148).

As will still be discussed in the subsequent chapter, the liberalization phase usually leads to a “democratization” phase while the regime is still in place, and it is generally regarded that this “democratization” phase in turn ends after first free elections have been held. The research time of this dissertation for the respective countries of research therefore falls in the “liberalization” and “democratization” phases. This although in the case of Hungary the liberalization phase did indeed begin before the time of analysis began; while in the case of the GDR the “liberalization” phase only began fairly late during the time of analysis.

This dissertation views that within this setting of the transformation theory, the media as an institution as well as the individual journalists were able to influence the transformation processes in different ways. On the one hand, one had the media system, which had a

central position in the socialist one party system (see chapter: the role of the Media in State socialism). In this the media employees – especially the higher ranking *nomenklatura* – members can indeed be seen as being regime members. These *nomenklatura* members experienced an elevated position within the socialist systems, often enjoying more authority and claiming higher privileges to the rest of society. A high number of media *nomenklatura* later became politburo members, and nearly all enjoyed direct access to the members of the politburo. Any variation in the media “output” would immediately signal to society that something was changing politically. On the other hand, the individual journalists (often the lower rank and file) although being children of the system, wanted to foster a reform of the system at least to some extent. Thus, in this they became actors in society demanding greater social and political liberties, creating a public platform for critical and above all diverse debate. These ideas are now further elaborated in the subsequent two chapters, which analyse firstly how the media as an institution comprising of regime elites, could positively influence the transformation processes; and secondly how many journalists began to support societal forces taking the lead and demanding change.

### **1. The role of the elites during the democratization process**

Overall, the literature on democratization usually includes universal statements either describing a single route to democracy, or emphasising common set of factors, of varying significance, which have been portrayed as significant to all processes of democratization (McSweeney & Tempest, 1993, pg 409). Looking at the set of factors, it is generally suggested that some set of factors produce and sustain democracy more than others as either causes or vital conditions (McSweeney & Tempest, 1993, pg 410). A great number of academics suggest that the behaviour, attitudes and values of the elites of the authoritarian regime are a very major critical factor in the success and failure of democratization (see Bos, 2004; Burton, Gunther & Higley, 1992; Huntington, 1991; Merkel & Puhle, 1999; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). Bos (2004) for example argues that during the different phases of the transition processes, the political systems are decisively influenced by the various actors (both regime and opposition). Huntington argues that “Democracies are created not by causes but by causers” (Huntington, 1991, pg 108), continuing by stating: “In transformations those in power in the authoritarian regime take the lead and play the decisive role in ending that regime and changing it into a democratic system” (Huntington, 1991, pg 124).

Ideally, the elites of the regime and the opposition can be broken down into 2 groups each. The ruling elite is usually split between “hardliners” and “softliners”. While the “softliners” attempt to give the regime an increasingly democratic legitimacy usually through increasing liberalization and reforms (see O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986), the “hardliners” resist any changes from occurring (Bos, 2004). The oppositional groups, which usually form as a consequence of a form of political liberalization, usually consist of moderate and extreme actors (ibid). The moderates usually attempt to engage in some form of negotiation with the regime, and many do not plan to do away with the existing system completely (either as they really aspire to simply modify the existing system, or because they do not believe that a complete collapse of the system would be possible). The extremists favour a complete break with the old regime and usually highly distrust the representatives of the old system. As stated by Linz, those favouring a complete *rupture* with the past want a clear “break with the existing institutional arrangements, a change not controlled and even without any participation by those who, to one or another extent, had a share in the previous regime” (Linz, 1991, pg151) The “hardliners” as well as oppositional extremists usually pursue high-risk strategies, while the “softliners” and moderates usually pursue risk-avoiding strategies (Bos, 2004). These strategies, however, do not necessarily imply that the end aims of each respective elite diverge. Sometimes the aspired objectives are the same, the divergence then is what path should best be taken to achieve this (Ibid). Taken that the interests of each actor remains the same, their strategies may change if they are confronted with new pre-conditions or their assessment of the possible process changes (In the sense of which possibilities may arise). According to Bos, opposition forces usually consist of intellectuals, artists, human rights groups and church circles. Parties, trade unions and further interest groups may become part of these (Bos, 2004, pg 33).

The initial liberalization of the authoritarian regime begins with a split in the actions of the ruling elite. As argued by O'Donnell and Schmitter “there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence - direct or indirect – of important divisions within the authoritarian regime” (O'Donnell/Schmitter, 1986). The reasons for the apparent split in the ruling regime are usually diverse. On the one hand economical or external crisis can initiate the rupture, sometimes it is precisely in times of economic successes that the “softliners” wish to increase the regime legitimacy vis-à-vis the population (Bos, 2004), thus favouring the initiation of a liberalization process at a time of relative success for the regime. In the Central and Eastern European cases, literature suggests that the economic malice of the entire region, together with an increasing doubt in the legitimacy of the one party state,

apparent among a vast number of the populace as well as among a considerable amount of “softliners”, resulted in this split of the respective elites. As argued by Batt: “Key groups within the East European communist elites were demoralized by the manifest failures of their period of rule and showed clear signs of losing the sense of purpose and discipline that the ideology had provided” (Batt, 1991, pg 3). Sharman states that the “loss of ideological confidence was crucial to the fall of European Communism, which was a top-down process” (Sharman, 2003, pg 128). This process was greatly influenced by the changes initiated inside the Soviet Union by Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. “Specifically, the erosion of the Soviet Union’s ideological confidence and geopolitical will to use coercion gave an unprecedented opportunity to change existing power relations” (Ibid). Irrespective of these factors, the stability of the authoritarian regime is always threatened when collective concepts of different political systems appear.

The actual liberalization phase begins when the “softliners” manage to set off some form of political reform. Juan J. Linz states that: “transitions from authoritarianism to democracy tend to be initiated when leaders in the authoritarian regime start considering the possibility of a reform leading to some form of political democracy” (Linz, 1990, pg 150). Huntington writes: “The first step was the emergence of a group of leaders or potential leaders within the authoritarian regime who believed that movement in the direction of democracy was desirable or necessary” (Huntington, 1991, pg 127).

Bos (2004) argues that historical experience suggest that the attempts by the ruling elite to implement a controlled form of political liberalization (initiating a controlled opening) are doomed to fail. Usually, the introduction of reforms leads to the liberalization process receiving an own momentum. Reforms bringing a political and economic liberalization usually lead to a dramatic increase in the amount of independent organizations in society, and existing organizations tend to assert increasing independence from the states control. As suggested by Linz “the process of liberalization reduces in turn the incentives for participation in the institutions of the regime and gives increased room to test the limits of freedom and power” (Linz, 1991, pg 148). (A notable exception to this is surely the case of China, where the controlled political and economical liberalization reforms appear to not have significantly threatened the standing of the regime.) As soon as the protests extend to the entire population, leading to public discontent, unrest and demonstrations, the liberalization phase ends. (Bos, 2004, pg 33). From this moment onwards two possible alternatives arise. The first is that the ruling elite decides to return to the authoritarian system (meaning an increase in state repression vis-à-vis the population and the newly founded organizations as well as the forcing of all state organizations to follow the regimes

directives). The second involves the triggering of further social, political and economic freedoms thus initiating a process of democratization (Bos, 2004, pg 34; see also Przeworski, 1992).

The initiation of the liberalization phase often comes as a result of misunderstandings and wrong interpretations on the side of the actors (Bos, 2004, pg 34; see also Przeworski, 1992). It is frequently the case that reform minded members of the ruling elite initiate an opening of the system, believing that they can control the subsequent events if necessary with the use of repressive measures. However, through the mass mobilization (usually accompanied by civil unrest) initiated by the liberalization, the actors that had initiated the process subsequently begin to doubt the usefulness of further repression given the already existent civil instability, or simply come to the conclusion that the costs of further repressions would be too high. Sociological and psychological factors also play a role, as personal relations between “softliners” and oppositional actors may already have led to informal discussion. If a form of dialogue between the “softliners” and the moderate opposition actors develops, and the ruling elite recognize that the opposition forces are open to reasonable negotiation and compromise, the evaluation on the side of the elites may change, insofar as the prospects of democratization no longer seem as threatening for their own positions and further repressions seem too excessive (Bos, 2004, pg 34).

Alternatively, it is also possible that the ruling elites in allowing democratization at the same time act completely irrational, pursuing a strategy that does not stand any chance of success. In this case the liberalizers inside the regime may initiate the process of democratization believing that they would succeed during free and fair elections, which they usually, however, lose (Przeworski 1990, pg 195). The only exception to this is Turkey's transition to democracy in 1947, which occurred without the participation of the opposition (Linz, 1991, pg 151), as well as to an extent the transition in Rumania, which with hindsight appeared more like a palace coup.

A successful democratization requires the replacement of the old system and regime through introduction of democratic institutions and processes. The experience of the transitions of the third wave of democratization lead to the conclusion, that both can only successfully arise through a settlement between “softliners” and moderate opposition members (Bos, 2004; Przeworski, 1992). As argued by Huntington: “Negotiations and compromise among political elites were at the heart of the democratization process” (Huntington, 1991, pg 165). Ursula J. van Beek argues: “The driving force remains the political game, that is the complex negotiations and deal-making between the members of

the old regime and the democratic opposition” (van Beek, 2005, pg 66). The results of these agreements are usually formulated in formal or informal “pacts” between these two elite groups. These “pacts” usually include agreements regarding a redistribution of power, whereby both sides recognize the interests of the other side. Mostly, they are negotiated and formulated behind closed doors by a small number of elite actors on both sides, who do not possess a democratic legitimacy to formulate these transformation agreements. Usually these compromises are subject to scrutiny after the transition has occurred, and are therefore unstable. Hence, after a democratic system has been installed these pre-transition agreements may be annulled or changed. Additionally, political developments may occur (even before the transition is complete) which may question these negotiated “pacts” (Bos, 2004).

In order for a compromise between the “softliners” and moderate opposition actors to emerge, several factors need to be present. Firstly, the “softliners” need to be in the position to persuade or force the “Hardliners” to agree. Secondly, the moderate opposition actors need to outnumber or control the radical opposition actors (Bos, 2004). In order to persuade the “hardliners”, compromise is usually necessary which the moderate opposition needs to accept and can be enforced vis-à-vis the extremists. The active actors are therefore the “softliners” and the moderates, whereby the “hardliners” and extremists are to be regarded as “quasi actors” (quoted in Bos, 2004) acting from the background. The latent possibilities by both “hardliners” and extremists to disturb the negotiations between “softliners” and moderates make them a relevant player insofar as their interests have to be taken into consideration during the negotiations. This as the negotiations between the “softliners” and the moderates are constantly in danger to fail through actions by both “hardliners” and extremists, including further repressive measures initiated by the “hardliners” and excessive demonstrations and strikes by the extremists.

For the successful completion of the liberalization phase it is important that the actors involved in the negotiations agree on free and fair elections, with the subsequent inauguration of a democratically elected parliament and government. The “democratization” phase is usually regarded as being completed after these elections have been held (Bos, 2004). Linz and Stepan (1996) however, believe that this alone does not suffice to bring the democratization phase to a closing. For them: “A democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to



generate new policies, and when the executive legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*” (pg 3).

In contrast to the liberalization and democratization phases in authoritarian systems, the consolidation phase usually becomes a tedious process, marked by slow progress and constant setbacks. Although the consolidation phase is not relevant for the analysis of this dissertation, it does make sense to shortly point out that here too, the actors remain an important factor. In this phase the number of actors increases as professional politicians, parties and interest groups get involved in the decision making process. Predominant factors that dominate the agenda during this phase are the successful tackling of severe economic problems, the control of all institutions, the questions of how to deal with crimes committed by the old regime as well as a successful transition towards a democratic political culture (Bos, 2004). As argued by various academics (Bos, 2004; Burton, 1992; Diamond, 1997) the development towards a political culture evident both inside the new elite but also in the population greatly depends on decisions made by the new leaders. Leaders interested in a successful transition with the competence and courage to make important decisions at the right time.

As identified previously, the media can indeed be seen as being part of the authoritarian regime. If one acknowledges the media being part of the authoritarian regime, then any opposition of the media to the status quo of the political system can (according to the actor based theories) have a positive effect on fostering the process of democratization. Additionally, the attempts by the “softliners” to initiate a controlled opening as identified by Bos (2004), are usually conducted by allowing an opening within the media. Thus the media *nomenklatura* usually consisting of a considerable number of “softliners” become both the initiators and first beneficiaries of this “controlled” opening.

## **2. The role of societal forces taking the lead during the democratization process**

In discussing the role of the media one has to distinguish on one side the role of the media as such – with the given role of the media in the socialist state – and on the other the role of the individual journalists. Consequently, in analysing the role of the media in democratization, one has to analyse these two different aspects. Subsequently, while having identified that the media as part of the ruling elite may have a positive influence on the transformation process, at the same time, one also has to analyse the role of many journalists themselves.

Here, this dissertation regards the journalists as being part of both the regime (both “Hardliners” and “Softliners”; for this dissertation the importance, however, is placed on the “softliners”) but also moderate opposition elites. The argument of Bos (2004), mentioned previously, namely that opposition forces usually consist among others of intellectuals, therefore also of writers and journalists, is important in understanding this role. O’Donnell and Schmitter argue that societal forces need to be present who recognise the changed political situation early on and manage to exploit these for their own goals, placing themselves at the head of the transformation process. As argued by O’Donnell and Schmitter: “the catalyst in this transformation comes first from gestures by exemplary individuals, who begin testing the boundaries of behaviour initially imposed by the incumbent regime” (O’Donnell/Schmitter, 1986, pg 49).

While this dissertation does not suppose that the journalists managed to become the head actors in this process, it is a point of the dissertation to suggest, that the Journalists were one part of and more importantly actively supported these societal forces, creating a public platform for them. As the political reality was changing, the journalists – who often witnessed this coming of change before it became apparent to the rest of society - increasingly began to demand more autonomy, expanding the limits that had been set on them. As suggested by O’Donnell and Schmitter: “Usually, artists and intellectuals are the first to manifest public opposition to authoritarian rule, often before the transition has been launched. Their capacity to express themselves by oblique metaphors no doubt protect them, as does their membership in a de facto world system of cultural exchange....those individual and artistic expressions have close links with, and strong repercussions within, certain collectivities, such as universities, literary journals, scholarly reviews, professional associations, and research groups. Through these linkages previously forbidden themes are discussed in semi-public forums, and connections are made with analogous experiences elsewhere” (O’Donnell/Schmitter, 1986, pg 49-50).

### **3. Concept of analysis / research design: Content analysis and interviews**

The empirical emphasis of this dissertation is a content analysis of the respective newspapers on the one hand, and interviews of contemporary witnesses and scholars on the other hand, which are subsequently compared with each other. Furthermore, background literature research was conducted.

### 3.1. Content analysis

Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Krippendorff, 1980). Singletary writes that content analysis is a descriptive form of research that takes a look into media (Singletary, 1994). Holsti defines content analysis as any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages (Holsti, 1969). It is an empirical method in order to systematically and objectively elucidate the substance of communication. According to Zipf's law, the assumption is that words and phrases mentioned most often are those reflecting important concerns in every communication. Therefore, quantitative content analysis starts with the setting up of categories and the usage of keyword frequencies. According to the Lasswell "Formula" the question addressed in a content analysis is: "Who says what in which channel, to whom, with what effect" (Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth, 1989). In this dissertation the first part of the "Formula": "who says what in which channel" is the "output" analysis; the last part: "with what effect" is the "outcome" analysis.

Additionally, one has to differentiate between qualitative and quantitative content analysis. While the quantitative approach makes sure that a representative study can be carried out, the qualitative approach uses background information in order to explain what is written (Mayring, 2000). Thus while methods in quantitative content analysis transform observations of found categories into quantitative statistical data, the qualitative content analysis focuses more on the intentionality and its implications.

This analysis follows the forms of method mix as suggested by Mayring (2000) and Robert Philip Weber (1990), whereby background information is taken in order to explain the findings of the data analysis. However, the *qualitative analysis received a greater weighting*, the reasons of which being described underneath.

### 3.2. Content analysis design

The content analysis for this dissertation is set to examine whether -and if at what point – the media began to break free from the regimes control, becoming an independent actor in the emerging process and beginning to break on previously taboo topics, gradually fostering and demanding reform. Thus, it investigates the "output" analysis as previously mentioned. It analyses whether an increase in the media's critical stance vis-à-vis the

regime developed after the communists grip on power had already been substantially eroded, or whether the media's actions fostered this erosion of regime power.

The time of analysis for each respective country was:

1. With respect to the GDR from the 7.5.1989 to the 18.3.1990
2. With respect to Hungary from the 28.1.1989 to the 25.3.1990

The content analysis in the GDR begins with the election fraud of May 1989. Therefore an emphasis was put on the reporting one week following the event by taking daily samples, but also through a continual spot check analysis. This mainly as the regime was still too firmly in charge in May 1989; any criticism on part of the media on this subject would expectedly be weak then, but grow over the period of research. The content analysis ends on the day of the first free elections in the GDR.

The content analysis for Hungary begins with the reference by Imre Pozsgay on January 28<sup>th</sup> 1989, that the events of 1956 were a "popular uprising" and not a counter-revolution, as previously stated by the regime. Subsequently, a daily analysis will be made for one week following the statement. Here too, the analysis ends on the day of the first free elections since the communists had taken over power.

The content analysis is conducted following two different approaches:

The first approach is a spot check (random sampling) analysis of weekly issues covered (always Wednesdays) during this time of analysis.

The second approach is the selective analysis of issues during important dates of events (see below). Here samples are taken for specific questions on the day of the events as well as for a case varying daily period after the events had taken place.

Furthermore, daily issues were covered during the 11 days prior to the respective elections which both serve as ending dates of the content analysis. Special attention was given to the sources of the articles, especially in determining to what extent the respective papers became a source for a general public discourse on certain issues.

Next to the respective events that serve as the starting points for the analysis in the GDR and in Hungary, the focus is on the reporting of the respective newspapers on 2 further issues in the GDR and 2 further issues in Hungary. Both of the countries have one issue in common: namely the issue of *political scandals* of the past and the present, including

mismanagement and corruption of party officials. How did the respective newspapers cover these issues?

Additionally, one further issue is covered for the respective countries, which although not being identical, both relate to the way the newspapers covered *questions of how politically and constitutionally the respective countries should continue*. These issues were:

1. In the case of the GDR, the additional focus is on the way the newspapers began addressing questions relating to the political alternatives that then appeared possible (particularly the topic of whether the GDR should re-unify with the FRG or whether a third way - a socialism with a human face" - might be possible). To what extent did the newspapers offer a diverse discussion on the topic? To what extent did the issues raised by the respective newspaper mirror in the demands of the demonstrators or in what in effect happened in the end? To what extent did the media become a platform for the various emerging opposition groups?

2. As for Hungary, the additional focus is on the way the newspapers began covering one aspect of the round table negotiations, namely the question of whether the president should be elected by the electorate before the parliamentary elections of March 1990, or rather by the newly elected parliament, thus the questions of whether Hungary should be a presidential or a parliamentary democracy and to what extent the old regime would manage to retain power in the new system. (This as it was generally assumed that most likely a member of the regime – most probably Imre Pozsgay – would emerge as the winner of the election as he was most known).

With respect to the focus question of *political scandals* of the past and the present, special attention was given to 2 issues in the GDR and 2 issues in Hungary. These issues were:

For the GDR:

1. The storming of the *Stasi* offices in December 1989, as well as the public demand for and subsequent dissolving of the *Stasi*'s successor organisation "*Amt für nationale Sicherheit*" which had been created in November 1989. (The first storming of the *Stasi* offices occurred on December 4<sup>th</sup> in Erfurt)
2. The party-exclusion of Erich Honecker and Erich Mielke on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1989.

For Hungary:

1. The opening of the state archives, especially those of the secret police, following the cultural ministers decree of autumn 1989 stating that public access to these archives was a human right;
2. The *Dunagate* scandal of December 1989.

As to the discussion of which political future would be best for the GDR, this topic is analysed exclusively through the spot check analysis, as no direct date can be identified for this. (Although one expected to find the discussion on political alternatives to have taken place once the wall opened: this was also confirmed by the findings).

As for the round table negotiations in Hungary, in addition to the spot check analysis, daily newspaper issues are taken 2 weeks prior to the referendum held on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

**For the GDR the content analysis therefore was:**

<b>Event:</b>	<b>Focus form:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Content analysis method:</b>
Elections of May 1989	Starting event for content analysis	7.5.1989–13/14.5.1989. After that weekly spot check analysis	Daily issues for one week. After that spot-check analysis until March 1990.
Political scandals of the past and the present (general)	Focus question	Continuous	Spot check (Random sampling)
Political scandals of the past and the present (special attention) 1. Storming of <i>Stasi</i> offices 2. Party exclusions of Honecker & Mielke	Focus question (Special attention)	December 4 <sup>th</sup> , 1989 – January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1990	Daily specific samples
Question of which political alternative exists	Focus question	Continuous	Spot check (Random sampling)
Elections of March 1990	Content analysis end event	7.3- 18.3.1990	Daily specific samples

**For Hungary the content analysis therefore was:**

<b>Event:</b>	<b>Focus form:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Content analysis method:</b>
Comments by Imre Pozsgay	Starting event for content analysis	28.1.1989-25.3.1989	Daily issues for one week. After that spot-check analysis until March 1990.
Political scandals of the past and the present (general)	Focus question	Continuous	Spot check (Random sampling)
Political scandals of the past and the present (special attention) 1. Opening of state archives 2. <i>Dunagate</i> scandal	Focus question (Special attention)	October 16 <sup>th</sup> to 26 <sup>th</sup> 1989, and December 18 <sup>th</sup> 1989, to January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1990.	Daily specific samples
Round table negotiations	Focus question	Continuous as of June 13 <sup>th</sup> , 1989 and specifically 2 weeks prior to the referendum held on November 25 <sup>th</sup> , 1989.	Spot check (Random sampling) as well as daily specific samples
Elections of March 1990	Content analysis end event	14.3-25.3.1990	Daily specific samples

**Reasons for focus question choice:**

**The GDR:**

*1. Content analysis starting event:* The election fraud of May 1989 – especially its degree and boldness – during a time when changes were unfolding throughout the entire socialist camp, showed just how distant the regime was from reality and it served as a shocking reminder how stringently the regime was holding onto power. The extent of the election approval for the government list (98,95 %), came as a surprise to the vast majority of the GDR's citizens in general as well as to “Block party” members and even some politburo members in particular. For many East Germans the election was seen as a sign of whether

finally the wind of change was also coming to the GDR; however, the result was quite the opposite. The direct leadership around Honecker ignored the will of the people and proceeded, as if indeed, the vast majority of GDR citizens were supportive of the regime. For many it sent a signal that despite the changes in the entire region, nothing was going to change in the GDR in the near future. This was one dominant point in influencing so many people to leave the GDR in the coming months; a reaction which would lead to a rather serious refugee problem by October 1989, and thus to a further dramatic symbol of the regime's illegitimacy. Furthermore, the extent of the election fraud as well as the rigid fashion in which the regime seemed to impose its right to govern, alienated not only the "Block-party" members, but also an increasing number of SED party members. As remembered by Manfred Garlach, Chairman of the LDPD from 1967 to 1990, by the end of May 1989, especially after the flawed elections, the LDPD members increasingly began to demand that the regime begin an open discussion on the problems of the time, especially concerning the economic situation and concerning democratic questions (Gerlach, 1991). The election of May 1989 therefore represents one dominant event in the downward spiral of the SED's monopoly on power, and in this the most outstanding during the first half of 1989.

*2. Political scandals of the past and the present:* As the regime was losing its grip on power, the initial response of the new leadership around Egon Krenz was to concentrate on the mistakes made in the past, and to argue that the new leadership would now erect a truly democratic system, and that the mistakes of the past would be corrected. This, however, had the consequence that it also led to the mistakes of the present from being addressed in society, and that these two (the mistakes of the past and the present) dramatically discredited the attempts by the regime to retain any remaining authority, support and legitimacy. Above all, in effect it discredited the attempts by the new leadership to distance herself from the past. Out of this reason this topic received special attention in the content analysis, in order to investigate to what extent the media fostered this process.

The storming of the *Stasi* offices received special attention, as the *Stasi* most strongly stood for the regimes Stalinist surveillance system, which had managed to corrupt and to terrorize the entire East-German society for decades. The question of *Stasi* files, and the shock on how many people had been informal informants and who had been spied upon, became a dominant theme in the East-German process of coming to terms with the own past. Until today, the *Stasi*'s work and personnel remain a prevailing topic in German society.



The party exclusions of Erich Honecker and Erich Mielke stand for the regimes attempts, on the one side, to demonstrate that the mistakes of the past were finally being addressed; but on the other side, it demonstrated the frantic situation the party was in. The question of how the media began covering these issues, therefore appeared central in understanding the transformation of the media towards an independent actor.

In addition, one further scandal was used as a keyword phrase for the content analysis, namely that of the housing estate of "*Wandlitz*". Although it did not serve as a focus question per se, the quantitative content analysis was set to determine as of when the respective newspapers began to cover this topic and the qualitative analysis examined what was written about it. This as the "scandal" was one strong factor in discrediting the Krenz regime (as will still be discussed).

3. *Question of which political alternative exists.* In analysing democratization processes, all the more so when comparing these with one another, one needs to keep in mind that every transition is in a very real sense distinctive. One distinctive topic in the GDR's transformation was the question on how to continue politically. While the "softline" fraction of the SED and the majority of opposition members present during the round table negotiations, clearly favoured a move towards retaining an independent GDR on the basis of a "third way" – that was a truly democratic system along the lines of a "socialism with a human face" – the majority of the masses on the streets demanded a unification with the FRG and a transformation towards a market economy as soon as possible. Indeed, also internationally the issue created considerable furore. It thus became a central question in the very existence of the GDR, as well as in the question of whether a unified Germany would be in the interest of a peaceful Europe. Therefore, it appeared stressing to choose this issue as a focus question and to analyse how the media began covering it.

4. *Elections of 1990:* With the elections of March 1990, the regime lost its power base and the GDR embarked on the process of consolidating her young democracy, ending the "democratization" phase. In the GDR, with the unification with the FRG in October of 1990, this went somewhat quicker than in other Central and Eastern European countries.

### **Hungary:**

1. *The comments by Imre Pozsgay on the 1956 events:* The comments by Pozsgay on the events of 1956 had a drastic effect on the entire liberalization process. The comments were part of a report that Pozsgay had headed, which investigated the events of 1956.

Especially important was that the comments were made by Pozsgay during an interview for a news programme without having first consulted the rest of the politburo. As will still be discussed, the comments created a political *"fait accompli"*, and prevented a looming military putsch by Károly Grósz and a small amount of "hardliners" in the politburo. With this he had forced the entire party to address the central legitimacy dilemma of the Kádár era, and greatly strengthened the position of the "softliners" in the public's perception. Out of this reason, this central event during the first half of 1989 was taken as the starting point of this content analysis.

*2. Political scandals of the past and the present:* Similar to the GDR, the question of the political scandals of the past but also the present dominated the societal discussions as of 1989. While initially it seemed that the "softliners" were managing quite successfully to distance themselves from the past, enjoying considerable sympathy among the population, increasingly the discussion of both former and present scandals also de-legitimated the reform forces within the party. Thus the topic became central in fostering an increasing democratization both within the communist elite but also within society in general.

The *Dunagate* scandal (as will still be discussed) was a strong issue in discrediting these moderate regime forces, portraying that also these were still receiving sensitive information from the secret police on opposition group activities and its members. The scandal therefore appeared as a dominant issue and thus received special attention in the content analysis.

The issue of the opening of state archives was likewise subject to considerable contestation by the population, as many believed that the regime was attempting to hide or destroy sensitive files or those compromising "softline" regime members. Additionally, it was felt that despite the promise by the regime to make these archives public, it seemed that access to these was far from being made possible. Thus, the way in which the media began covering this topic appeared important and the subject thus received special attention.

*3. Round table negotiations:* The round table negotiations in Hungary were initiated by the regime, believing that it could retain control of the situation in this way and emerge from the negotiations as strongest force together with a coalition partner, most likely the MDF. At the end one central compromise reached during the round table negotiations, namely that Hungary would become a presidential republic and that the first president would be elected by popular vote before the parliamentary elections took place, was undone by a

referendum initiated by the junior partner in the opposition groups, the SZDSZ. The consequence of this referendum was critical: firstly, it inflicted a major blow to the regimes attempt of assuring party control in a new system and fostered an erosion of the MSZMP's authority; secondly, the referendum had a major influence on party politics, by boosting the image of the SZDSZ at the costs of the largest opposition force, the MDF, who appeared too cosy with the regime. In turn, the MDF had to distance herself more strongly from the regime if it wanted to regain credibility. The way in which the media handled this situation therefore appeared important in addressing the research question.

4. *Elections of 1990*: As was the case in the GDR, with the elections of 1989, the regime lost its power base, and Hungary ended the “democratization” phase, embarking on a consolidation process of its new democracy, which became synonymous with the quest of “returning to Europe”, culminating in the accession of Hungary to the European Union in 2004. This therefore appeared the logic point to end the time of analysis.

Although special attention was given to these topics, the qualitative content analysis revealed and gave insight into the further topics raised by the respective newspaper.

Method for the content analysis was a mix between qualitative and quantitative data analysis. In particular the quantitative analysis was conducted according the usage of predefined topics. Special attention is given to the Lasswell “Formula”, insofar as a special attention is given to commentaries by the respective newspapers or readers, to articles written by opposition / societal groups, and sources apart from the official state information services (ADN in the case of the GDR; MTI in the case of Hungary).

As the research is set to discuss at what point the respective newspapers began diverging from the official line, the logical research path appeared to be to concentrate on articles that were not formulated by the regime.

The qualitative analysis, using background information in order to explain what is written, supports the quantitative analysis of the focus questions. As the journalists often used „hidden language”, writing “between the lines”, in order to express opposition, the qualitative analysis attempts to translate and to measure this. For the qualitative analysis, special attention was given to the sources that the newspapers use (MTI, ADN or also western sources) as well as an analysis of the importance given to events or topics in the newspapers (Were the articles in the front page or rather at the back?). Thus, while the quantitative analysis gives insight as to whether a topic was mentioned at all, the

qualitative analysis attempts to measure what the respective newspaper / journalist wanted to convey.

The first part of the content analysis was done by identifying relevant articles through a keyword search of predefined words and phrases. These included the *topics of the focus questions* but also *further issues* that the research had identified as being *topics important for the transformation process*. Therefore, as one question of the dissertation research is set to examine at which point the respective newspapers began to mention the emerging *oppositional groups and parties* or as of when the newspapers became a platform for these, the predefined words and phrases were to analyse as of when this was indeed the case. In a next step these articles were then analysed qualitatively (especially the focus questions and the way the media began covering the emerging oppositional forces).

The predefined topics and words for the quantitative content analysis were therefore divided into the keywords for 1. The respective beginning and ending events for the content analysis; 2. The content analysis focus questions (including the focus question scandals at the time as well as further ones); 3. The names of opposition activists, groups and events; 4. Issues identified as being important to society during the time of research.

The first step for the keyword search was to identify the relevant topics, and then to specify the relevant “keywords” that were then to be documented during the content analysis. The topics and keywords were identified through background reading of literature as well as through the reading of the respective newspapers prior to the content analysis conduction.

Below these topics and keywords are outlined: where the reasons for the choice of these keywords are not self evident, a short explanation is provided underneath.

*For the GDR:*

<b><u>Focus questions</u></b>	<b><u>Topics and keywords</u></b>
<b>Respective beginning and ending events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elections of May 1989</li> <li>- Election Law</li> <li>- Election Fraud</li> <li>- Elections of March 1990</li> </ul>
<b>Content analysis focus questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wandlitz</li> <li>- Stasi Offices</li> <li>- Party exclusions: Honecker / Mielke</li> <li>- Attacks on the current work of the SED</li> </ul>

	<p><b>leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Mistakes of the past (including corruption, mismanagement, corruption and the misuse of powers)</b></li> <li>- <b>Political alternatives (whereas a differentiation was made between positive articles, negative articles and neutral articles):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <b>Confederation with the FRG</b></li> <li>ii) <b>Unification with the FRG</b></li> <li>iii) <b>Contractual unity with the FRG</b></li> <li>iv) <b>“Third way” – instead of the three above and instead of socialism in its current form</b></li> <li>v) <b>Socialism – a continuation of the current system</b></li> <li>vi) <b>Calls to give the SED a second chance</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Introduction of opposition groups / parties: either in form of references using foreign sources, own newspaper sources or commentaries as well as becoming a platform for these groups directly</b></p> <p>(The names of the parties and groups served as keywords for the content analysis: they were, however, not individually documented in the quantitative analysis, but rather as part of the topic).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>New Forum</b> (An anti-communist movement founded in September 1989 as the first independent (non-national front) political movement to be officially accepted by the government. In 1990 in combined forces with “Democracy now” and the “Initiative for peace and human rights” and collectively formed the “Alliance 90”).</li> <li>- <b>Democracy now</b> (A political movement founded in the stir of the collapse of the regime; it wanted to maintain a human, democratic version of socialism in opposition to what they believed as a “western consumer society”).)</li> <li>- <b>Group 20, Dresden</b> (The Group was created when following the demonstration on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1989, 20 citizens of Dresden were elected to discuss the political demands with the city government of Dresden. These later officially formed a political movement to foster democratic change, and were officially</li> </ul>

	<p>registered in October 1989)</p> <p><b>- Democratic awakening</b></p> <p>(Political movement founded in December 1989 in Leipzig, including prominent members such as the current German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Priest Rainer Eppelmann. In 1990 it merged with the CDU and thereafter ceased to exist)</p> <p><b>- Initiative for peace and human rights</b></p> <p>(Was the oldest opposition group in the GDR, being founded in 1986)</p> <p><b>- Church circles</b></p> <p>(The Churches for many years were the only places where the state had no direct influence, and where at least limited opposition could be voiced. They were the place where regime critics met, even if they were not religious, thus becoming the platform for discussion. Opposition was then voiced in the churches through pamphlets officially only for inside church use, as well as oppositional concerts disguised as church-mass music. In 1989 the Churches became the place where many demonstrations began, including the notorious Monday demonstration in Leipzig, that always took place after mass in the St. Nicholas' Church. As stated by Dr. Monika Zimmermann (Interview, 18.3.2008), the churches were to play a central role in the democratization movement).</p>
<p><b>Issues identified as being important to society (Important for the transformation process)</b></p>	<p><b>- Political transformation inside the Soviet bloc (whereby a differentiation was made between positive and negative articles)</b></p> <p>(The political events that were unfolding across the entire region came to have a devastating effect on the stability of the GDR's regime as well as for the very existence of the GDR. Thus it is interesting to observe as of when it became a subject in the GDR</p>

	<p>press, and as of when the press began covering these events positively.) Keywords: Reforms, dialogue, Perestroika, Glasnost, Democratization</p> <p><b>- Border closure between the GDR and Czechoslovakia</b></p> <p>(Following the massive refugee crisis in 1989, the GDR responded by closing its border with Czechoslovakia in an attempt to prevent further citizens from leaving. It was therefore interesting to observe as of when the media began reporting on the issue, and whether a positive or negative position was taken).</p> <p><b>- Refugee problem (Whereby a differentiation was made between the official state view and a more balanced view)</b></p> <p>(The refugee problem unfolding in September 1989 came to have a devastating consequence on the moral of both the regime and the people of the GDR, and it showed even more strongly how illegitimate the regimes claim to power really was. It largely exacerbated the coming collapse of the regime. The content analysis was therefore set to examine at what point a more balanced reporting on the issues around the refugee problem evolved within the media.)</p> <p><b>- Renewal of society, New realities, Change</b></p> <p>(One dominant trait of the GDR's regime was to ignore all events that were unfolding within the entire region but also within the GDR itself. This was made most evident when in October 1989, the regime went forward with the GDR's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as if everything was under control. Cries for reforms were ignored and suppressed in society, the bloc parties but even inside the SED. It was therefore interesting to see as of when the first discussion on the necessity of "change" or of "new</p>
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	<p>realities” first emerged in the official media and with what intention and consequence.)</p> <p><b>- New elections</b></p> <p>(As it became increasingly more evident that the socialist one party state was loosing its grip on power, the call for new truly democratic elections became dominant not only from the opposition but also from the previous “bloc parties”, and even from SED softliners. It was thus interesting to analyse as of when the call for new elections became a topic in the official media)</p> <p><b>- Demonstrations of 1989</b></p> <p>(One dominant factor that ultimately brought down the regime was the spreading of mass protests and demonstrations. In analysing the dissertation question it is therefore important to identify how the media covered these demonstrations and as of when a shift towards a more balanced view or even open support can be identified)</p> <p><b>- Round table negotiations</b></p> <p>(The round table negotiations that the regime was forced to engage in signalled not only the further retreat of the regime but also the circumstance that change was within reach. The content analysis was therefore set to examine to what extent the media began writing about this issue)</p> <p><b>- Leading role of the SED</b></p> <p>(Once the possibility of change seemed possible, the call for an end of the constitutionally set leading role of the SED became apparent not only from the opposition but also from the bloc parties and even some softline SED members. Indeed, the question was central for the successful democratization process. It was therefore interesting to observe as of when this issue emerged within the respective newspapers)</p>
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	<p><b>- Extraordinary party congress of December 1989</b></p> <p>(As the hardliners within the regime were increasingly being sidelined, the calls for an extraordinary party congress emerged that should set the course for a new truly democratic SED. The party congress that took place in December 1989 was indeed a tremendous impetus for the democratization process of the country and also of the SED party itself: agreeing to an end of the leading role of the SED, replacing the old guard and drawing up a new party programme. Issues that were covered during the congress were issues relevant for the entire country, therefore to what extent the congress was covered by the media and how seemed important for the successful understanding of dissertation question)</p> <p><b>- Different voices for and about economic reform (No ADN release) Including calls for a currency union with the West</b></p> <p>(One important factor in the transformation process was the transition from a planned economy to a western style market economy. Indeed, one of the dominant demands of the masses in 1989/90 was the call for a quick economic unification with the FRG. As it was therefore an important issue for society, the content analysis was set to establish when this discussed became apparent in the respective newspapers)</p> <p><b>- The problem of right-wing tendencies inside the GDR</b></p> <p>(The official position of the regime since 1945 was that right-wing tendencies were only a problem in the FRG, and that no such thing existed inside the GDR. In the wake of the unification, however, it increasingly became evident that it was indeed a</p>
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	<p>serious problem, which had never been successfully addressed and challenged in the GDR. As it became a serious issue of discussion dominating the reality of the unified Germany until the present, it was interesting to analyse as of when the newspapers began to identify the problem and how)</p> <p><b>- Questions related to GDR expropriation and the compensation of former owners</b></p> <p>(The issue of property expropriation dating back to the national socialists, the expropriation by the red army as well as by the GDR state became subject of heavy debate in the newly unified Germany, one that leaves unsolved court cases until today. As the issue was therefore important for the successful transformation, the content analysis was set to identify as of when it became an issue in the respective media and to what extent a truly diverse discussion emerged on the topic.)</p>
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*For Hungary:*

Category	Keywords / Phrases
Respective beginning and ending events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Statement by Imre Pozsgay</li> <li>- Elections of March 1990</li> </ul>
Content analysis focus questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dunagate</li> <li>- Opening of archives</li> <li>- Oppositional round table</li> <li>- Round table negotiations</li> <li>- Referendum initiated by opposition</li> <li>- Critical towards the past / reforms had not worked, mistakes that happened</li> </ul>
Introduction of	- MDF

<p><b>opposition groups / parties: either in form of references using foreign sources, own newspaper sources or commentaries as well as becoming a platform for these groups directly</b></p> <p>(The names of the parties and groups served as keywords for the content analysis: they were, however, not individually documented in the quantitative analysis, but rather as part of the topic).</p>	<p>(The MDF: Hungarian Democratic Forum was formed in September 1987 in Lakitelek, by Hungarian intellectuals with some support of communist officials)</p> <p><b>- SZDSZ</b> (The SZDSZ: Alliance of Free Democrats was founded in November 1988 as an opposition party)</p> <p><b>- FIDESZ</b> (The FIDESZ: Alliance of young democrats was also formed at the end of 1988 as a youthful libertarian, anticommunist party, largely as an alternative to the communist youth organizations)</p> <p><b>- Independent Smallholders party</b> (The Independent Smallholders party (a agrarian worker and civic party) had been the dominant party following the 1946 democratic elections, but had been subsequently sidelined and broken up by the communists. It was also re-founded at the end of 1988)</p>
<p><b>Issues identified as being important to society (Important for the transformation process)</b></p>	<p><b>- Need of economic reforms</b> (The need of economic reforms became a dominant topic in Hungarian society in 1989: thus it was interesting as of when this topic arose in the media)</p> <p><b>- Reform of socialist party state system</b> (The issue of reforming the socialist one party state system became an issue on the agenda of both reform communists and the opposition. It was therefore interesting to see when the media began covering the topic)</p> <p><b>- Need for constitutional reform / public control</b> (As the scandals of the past were unfolding, the public increasingly came to demand public constitutional control over the work of the</p>

	<p>government and the secret services as the only way to ensure that the mistakes of the past including corruption and the misuse of power would not be repeated. Additionally, as all aspects of society and the economy were being transformed, it became clear that many reforms were simply not possible or difficult without changing the constitution before (such as the question of private property). Hence, it was interesting to analyse as of when the media began covering the issue)</p> <p><b>- Round table discussions in Poland / changes and reforms in Poland</b></p> <p>(The events unfolding in Poland had a great impact on amplifying the transformation process throughout the entire region; it was therefore of interest for this content analysis)</p> <p><b>- March 15<sup>th</sup> celebration</b></p> <p>(Commemorating the 1848 revolution. This became the national holiday in 1989 instead of the previous national holiday on November 7<sup>th</sup>, Commemorating the October revolution, due to popular demand. It greatly signalled the loss of power of the regime)</p> <p><b>- The coming of the multi-party system</b></p> <p>(Background research had indicated that the media - either through own commentaries or articles by reform communists and opposition groups - had greatly fostered the cause of erecting a truly democratic multi-party system. Hence, the content analysis should shed light into the question of whether this really was the case).</p> <p><b>- Dismantling the barbed wire border between Hungary and Austria</b></p> <p>(The dismantlement of the barbed wire border with Austria signalled a further opening and it had</p>
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	<p>a profoundly negative impact for the GDR. The articles on this subject were therefore signalled out through the key word search and further analysed through a qualitative analysis)</p> <p><b>- Opening of border with Austria</b> (See above)</p> <p><b>- GDR refugees in FRG embassy in Budapest</b> (See above)</p> <p><b>- GDR refugees in FRG embassy in Prague</b> (See above)</p> <p><b>- Soviet troops leaving Hungary</b> (The issue of the remaining Soviet soldiers in Hungary stood as the strongest enduring symbol of the 1956 brutal reaffirmation of communist rule and it became subject to public detestation in the later 1980s. It was therefore interesting to observe as of when the issue was covered by the respective media)</p> <p><b>- Critical articles towards the party</b> (The point was to analyse at which point critical articles towards the regime could be identified, and how these increased over time)</p> <p><b>- Imre Nagy</b> (Imre Nagy had been removed from office and executed in 1956 after the Soviets had crushed the democratic forces. He remained a hero to the Hungarians and a symbol of 1956, the brutal reaction of the Soviet Union and the experiment of creating a truly democratic socialism with a human face. His person, however, became a taboo topic and it is therefore interesting to observe as of when the media began breaking on it)</p> <p><b>- Parcel 301</b> (It was widely believed that Imre Nagy was buried in a collective grave known as "Parcel 301". It was</p>
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	<p>interesting to investigate at what point the newspapers began to cover this, fuelling public debate on the issue and forcing the regime to openly state whether indeed Imre Nagy was buried in the grave. Additionally, it was the first attempt at breaking the taboo on writing on Imre Nagy by asking who was in the grave, without directly referring to him. )</p> <p>- <b>“Water barrage” “Bös-Nagymaros”</b></p> <p>(The Water barrage became a hated symbol of the old communist regime in the later 1980s, and in 1989, the government suspended the project following widespread public opposition. As it was such a dominant topic in Hungarian society, it was interesting to observe as of when it was mentioned in the media)</p> <p>- <b>Questions relating to party assets</b></p> <p>(The questions of the enormous party assets which the communists called their own in 1989 as well as the question of how oppositional groups and parties would gain access to public funding became a widespread topic in 1989)</p> <p>- <b>Events / reforms inside the GDR</b></p> <p>(The keyword search identified articles on important events and reforms inside the GDR. This was interesting for the dissertation analysis, as it gave insight into changes in the GDR, and how this was perceived by more liberal socialist “brother states”).</p> <p>- <b>Documents on the show court case of László Rajk</b></p> <p>(László Rajk was a high-ranking member of the Hungarian communist party, who became victim of Stalin’s rigorous cleansing of all homegrown communists and communists who did not directly follow his views. As his show trial became a</p>
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	political taboo, it was interesting to observe as of when the media began to break on this taboo.)
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Furthermore, an emphasis for the qualitative analysis in both countries was put on the way the respective newspapers began discussing the imminent economic transformation of the country, particular the privatization measures. To what extent did the newspapers hinder or support this?

Before the content analysis was carried out, a small amount of samples were taken and a pre-test of 10 randomly selected issues carried out. This made sure that the methodical framework with the pre-defined words and phrases worked.

### **Content analysis recordings:**

The rather extensive period of analysis as well the wide-ranging questions to be investigated, limited the extent of the quantitative analysis; classical methods such as counting the number of words and paragraphs and counting the number of times a topic was covered during each issue, and whether this was positive or negative each time, seemed beyond the scope of analysis. The logical consequence for the analysis conduction therefore appeared to be to divide the analysis time into half-months, and to record in this fashion which topics were covered within these two week time frames. As the spot check analysis was conducted once a week (Wednesdays) this usually meant 1 to 3 issues to be covered within the given 15-16 day time frame. The same division went for those events and issues – as described previously –, where daily samples were taken for case varying time periods. The recordings were then translated and can be found in the respective chapters of newspaper comparisons, as well as in the appendix.

For the recording it was important that the respective paper covered the topic at all within the given 15-16-day time frame (either as an own article / commentary or by a foreign source). Thus even if only one small article was printed, this was recorded. The recordings therefore do not suggest the frequency of the respective topics within each sample 15-16 day time period. N.B. the recordings only show topics that occurred following the predefined words and phrases: thus, certain further dominant topics existed; however, these were not recorded, as they did not match the predefined words set. No importance was given to length or prominence in the quantitative analysis, as this was then done in the qualitative part.

Heavy reliance was put on the mix between qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The qualitative analysis interpreted to what extent the respective article did indeed have a positive “output” intend or to what extent the article had “messages between the lines”. Thus, articles that did have an important message were recorded and are used in analysing the “output” intend of the respective newspapers.

The *qualitative analysis received greater weighting* within the overall content analysis. This made sense as the first step of the dissertation analysis was to measure the media “output”, which in turn led to the more important part for the successful investigation of the research question, namely the “outcome” aspect. As argued by Rife, Lacy and Fico (1998), in a quantitative content analysis the messages are separate and apart from communicators and receivers. This dissertation, however, attempts to analyse what effect the communication of the first had on the latter. Hence, while it was surely important that issues were covered at all (measured by the “quantitative” analysis), only a qualitative analysis combined with background knowledge could measure the intent of the respective article more clearly. It seemed that only in this way could an “output” intent be used to identify an “outcome” effect. Additionally, as little room existed for journalists to openly criticise the regime, much opposition was voiced through an “in between the line” or “indirect” writing. Especially this could only be identified through a “qualitative” analysis.

### **3.3. Interviews**

In order to successfully analyse whether the media “output” did indeed have a positive influence on the respective democratization process, it had to be investigated what effect this media “output” really had on society as well as to what extent it supported the emerging oppositional forces: thus the question of whether it indeed had an “outcome” effect. The findings of the content analysis were therefore compared to interviews of contemporary witnesses in order to find out to what extent the “output” did in reality have an “outcome” effect; to journalists working at that time, opposition activists, and members of the communist party. Additionally, scholars were used as interview partners to respond to specific questions. Furthermore, the content analysis only manages to capture part of the media’s “output”, and then only from 2 newspapers. The interviews were therefore also intended to give further insight in the general media “output” of the respective countries.

The aim of the interviews was to see to what extent the media - through its reporting- had actually initiated political discourse; in society, within the communist party, or even during



round table talks, and when changes in the way the newspapers reported can be observed. Additionally, the interviews were set to analyse to what extent the output of the media did in effect support the opposition groups from these groups' perspective. Did the opposition groups attempt to gain press coverage on themselves as well as on their programmes and discussions? If yes with what effect? This should give some suggestion as to whether the media did indeed play a role as forerunner or merely as mirror of what was happening in society, by showing if and at what point a change in the reporting of the media can be observed. Additionally, it should give insight into the question to what extent a possible forerunner role did in effect influence something. At what point did the media begin reporting on previously taboo topics, or on current scandals discrediting the attempts by the regime to portray themselves as reformers and committed to a truly democratic system? Did this occur before or after the loss of the communists' grip on power became seemingly irreversible?

Furthermore, the interviews were used to understand further aspects necessary for the successful completion of the dissertation. These included: the form of control exerted by the regime on the media in each respective country as remembered by the journalists; forms of censorship; the point when the journalists noticed that changes were occurring; the intentions of the journalists in 1989, following the regimes demise from their own perceptions; the way the regime ("hardliners" and "softliners") attempted to instrumentalize the media for their own goals; the way the opposition groups attempted to gain access to media coverage; the effect that the changing economic reality had on the working of the journalists and to what extent this influenced the medias "output".

For this purpose the interviewees were placed into different groups, each answering a different aspect necessary for a successful understanding of the role in the democratization processes (as mentioned previously). Thus, journalists were used to understand the media system during the time of research, and how it had changed over time, if at all, as well as the media's "output" intent from the journalists point of view; regime politicians were used to understand the political events and how these influenced the medias "output" from their perceptions; opposition activists were used to articulate the media transformation from their awareness, and to what extent they used the media as sources of information and news and above all to what extent the media supported their cause and with what effect; academics were used to answer specific questions unclear in their own publications on the topic or on continuative questions. Interview guideline questions were set up for each respective group, and the interviews held accordingly.

### **III. The impact of the Media on transition processes**

#### **1. Setting the scene: paths of State Socialism**

Before discussing the role of the Media in state socialism as well as its role in transition processes, it is important to describe the formation of state-socialism as such in the region of research; its initial imposition as well as the divergent paths each country took as the years went by. The understanding of this is crucial in recognizing why different media systems had different pre-conditions to influence the democratization processes by 1989.

By the end of the 1940's the grand wartime alliance was beginning to crumble, and Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech of March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1946, reflected reality. Europe was being split up between Western and Soviet spheres of influences.

Although Moscow had promised free and democratic elections in the countries "liberated" by the red army, the Soviet Union soon managed to marginalize or "co-ordinate" the major democratic parties of the region and imposed communist regimes. The new leaders of each country quickly began to fundamentally transform the way society had worked previously, embarking on a complete process of socialist transformation. The systems that emerged in all countries under Soviet hegemony were all characterized by dictatorship, marked by one party monopoly on power, extensive expropriation of private property and a complete infiltration of party control in all aspects of life; economical and social. As claimed by Batt, "communist ideology was universalist" (Batt, 2003, pg 6), promising an utopia of equality, wealth and justice for all and beyond traditional national lines. The regimes installed, legitimized their rule through the argument of a universally valid model that would ultimately lead to this "utopia". As argued by Lendvai, what differentiated the Soviet-type Communist systems imposed from the ancient despotism and modern dictatorships was above all, the ideology (Lendvai, 1981, pg 17). An ideology marked by the assumption of a sole and exclusive truth in politics, which was defined and legitimized by Marxist-Leninist thinking. Thus, the communist system was an experiment in enforcing conformity to this model upon the entire region (Lendvai, 1981).

At *Prima facie* therefore, at least superficially, it is tempting to view the systems of the Soviet Union and its satellite states as identical. However, at closer look, it becomes evident that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe among themselves as well as vis-à-vis the Soviet Union itself were not only marked by different historical legacies – economical, cultural and political –, but one also discovers that communism itself took on

markedly different forms. As suggested by Stokes: “the entire history of Eastern Europe from 1945 to 1989...can be considered one spasmodic imposition of Stalinism followed by forty years of adjusting, accommodating, opposing, reinterpreting, and rejecting” (Stokes, 1997 pg 184). As argued by Batt, (1991, pg 4): “The uniformity of the political and economic systems of the East European satellites gave way to increasing diversity as the communist regimes struggled to stabilize their power by supplementing the crude coercion of the Stalin period with some concessions to `national specifics`”. Sükösd, (2000, pg 131) states: “As a result, domestic political and social forces played an ever-growing role in shaping national political and media systems as different governing Communist parties chose different paths to regime consolidation”.

Ultimately, the communist regimes recognized the problem of implementing uniform Soviet style policies; namely that it completely ignored the diverse historical contexts, socioeconomic developments, class structures, democratic traditions and experiences, as well as cultural traditions that had existed prior to WWII. This mistake resulted in various outbreaks of national demonstrations and unrest, first in East-Germany in 1953, in Poland in 1956, the Hungarian revolution of 1956 as well as the “Prague Spring” of 1968. All these demonstrated the weakness of the centralized model as imposed by Moscow, its lack of authentic roots in the countries of the region, and above all its failure in providing the promised superior economy and standard of living to that provided by Western capitalism (Batt, 2003).

It became clear, that a uniform form of communism across Central and Eastern Europe could not be implemented. Although these revolts were all forcibly crushed, and “normalization” as dictated by Moscow quickly re-asserted, the popular uprisings had made it clear that some latitude had to be given to the different countries to respond more flexibly to national conditions (Batt, 2003). As a result, the extent and possibilities of state control over society and implementation of communist policies began to diverge significantly throughout Central and Eastern Europe. This process was accompanied by a general process of “de-Stalinization” and Khrushchev’s “decade of euphoria” from 1954-64 led by Moscow, and resulted in domestic political and social forces increasingly influencing their own national political systems (Sükösd, 2000).

With hindsight, one can say that the forceful intervention of Moscow in some countries proved fruitful in re-imposing restrictive regimes that managed to marginalise opposition and to reassert social control, while in others it did not. Consequently, while some countries such as the GDR continued to follow a strict form of barely modified Stalinism

until the very end, other countries such as Poland and Hungary were marked by a transition to a model of “tolerant repression” early on (Sükösd, 2000). The aim of this “tolerant repression” in the Hungarian case was to construct some form of popularity for the communist system, without weakening one party monopoly on power too extensively. However, as a consequence, this allowed a comparably independent society to emerge that eventually challenged the communist’s exclusive right to rule (Stokes, 1993).

## **2. Setting the scene: the role of the Media in State Socialism**

The media of the Soviet bloc were completely reorganised according to the basic ideals of Karl Heinrich Marx, Friedrich Engels and especially Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. In applying one-party control and realizing the party’s domination over all aspects of society, the media were regarded as a central tool in articulating communist propaganda and in securing mass persuasion, support and mobilization. In this – as formulated by Lenin – the media’s function was not only that of a collective propaganda machine and collective agitator but also that of a collective organizer (Lenin, 1958, quoted from v. Steinsdorff, 1994, pg 85). As the socialist societies aspire to become ‘classless societies’ and thus should lack an internal class conflict, the media should not be structured along the lines of political conflict (McQuail, 1987).

Communist ideology presupposed objective laws of history and thus an objective reality that the press must reflect. This greatly reduced the extent of personal interpretation and presented a set of constant news values (McQuail, 1987). The entire media system was to assist communist ideology as the central information and propaganda organ, controlling information and attempting to produce it in such a manner as to secure and strengthen political control, communicating the party’s image of reality. As argued by Lowenthal “The monopolistic control of all channels of public communications, from the press and other mass media to all forms of education, of literature and arts, with the aim not merely of preventing the expression of hostile or undesirable opinions by a kind of censorship, but of controlling the formation of opinion at the source by the planned selections of all the elements of information” (Cited in Lendvai, 1981, pg 18). The role of the media was to legitimize communist rule, to mobilize public support for government decisions at home, as well as Soviet and Warsaw pact decisions and actions in general, and to de-legitimize Western democracies. The media’s role was a “political socialization and Sovietization” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 126) of the public.

Consequently, the communist regimes began to monopolize mass communication; its ownership, selection of employees and its reporting. Although some newspapers remained *de jure* independent, *de facto* independence was limited through close party control. Opinions dissenting from official view were repressed by censorship and by severe disciplinary measures should journalists depart from party line (Splichal, 1994). No genuine public opinion in the sense of “the public expression of agreement or dissent concerning institutions” (Bobbio, 1989, pg 26) existed. The sphere of “civil society” was to be almost completely absorbed by the state (Splichal, 1994).

Apart from the role as party state propagandist the media was also regarded as a major factor in securing the power and control of the party leadership. This role became especially evident during party purges throughout all regimes of the soviet block, where the media were used to legitimize the purges, to discredit the often well-known victims vis-à-vis the people and to create support for the leadership. Additionally, the media were often used as a central tool in building up personalization cults that existed in various regimes, beginning with Joseph Stalin and Nicolae Ceausescu in extreme forms but also Mátyás Rákosi and Todor Zhivkov to lesser degrees.

The Journalist was seen as a party functionary. Lenin had argued that articles must conform absolutely to the party doctrine (Lendvai, 1981). Party-mindedness (*partiinnost*) the most frequently mentioned personal trait required of a Journalist in the Soviet Union and later all countries under Soviet hegemony, meant that a Journalist serving the party state must assess every issue from the party point of view, meaning an absolute dedication to the party and conformity to its directives (Lendvai, 1981, pg 21). As argued by Aron, “Lenin’s fanaticism has become the orthodoxy of an empire” and Marxism-Leninism the “camouflage for a satisfied bureaucracy” (Aron, quoted in Lendvai, 1981, pg 22). The role of the media was to communicate and create public support and acceptance for decisions already taken – by the party elite behind closed doors. Argued by Lendvai “The primary task of the media is therefore not to chronicle daily events and to compete through credibility for the public’s confidence, but to serve the party”. (Lendvai, 1981, pg 22)

It is important to note that the manner in which the media in State Socialism was controlled, exceeded by far forms of state censorship and self-censorship usually seen in countries under authoritarian / totalitarian dictatorship. The media in non-communist authoritarian / totalitarian systems are generally described as manipulative and subversive of individual freedom and political liberties (Neuman, 1991, quoted in Gunther & Mughan, 2000, pg 4), the defining feature being strict regime control over the media in order to

achieve aims set by self-selected, unaccountable political leaders who control the media system through “unconstrained and pervasive power” (Ibid). Under State Socialism, however, this went considerably further. One important example of this is the ownership structure. In the case of Pinochet in Chile or Franco in Spain, the regime closely controlled the media, being able to suspend licenses and in theory being able to intervene in the appointment and dismissal of newspapers editors. However, especially the print media often remained in private hands, which guaranteed at least some form of commercialized logic and autonomy. This was not the case in the region of research, where topics were chosen solely on the grounds of ideological/propagandist value, not following any commercial reason. In the logic of Soviet style media control, all forms of media channels belonged to or were at least directly dependent on the state. The press became an integral part of the state and party apparatus. As argued by Lendvai, starting with the printing machines, working capital and newsprint, to stationary and typewriters, everything had to be given by the party. Apart from having the possibility of simply forbidding the publication, the party state could prevent newspaper publications simply by not giving them access to the infrastructure needed to print. Journalists had to closely abide to the decisions taken by the politburo and the detailed instructions of the press sections of the Agit-Prop (Agitation-Propaganda) departments (Lendvai, 1981).

There existed several means of guaranteeing and enforcing control over the media by the party leadership. The first was the so-called *nomenklatura* system, whereby the party elite controlled leadership positions in all key political, social, economical and cultural institutions. Usually a Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the party’s central committee effectively controlled the media through nomination and appointment of the media *nomenklatura*, comprising of chief editors and other leading positions (Szakadat, 1993). These practices were not officially acknowledged or legally fixed, but nonetheless represented an integral part of the media systems throughout the region. As control over the media was seen as vital for the communist regimes, the work of the media became subject to constant interventions by the party (Sükösd, 2000). Direct telephone lines connected editorial offices with leading party officials (Lendvai, 1981). In this way the party made sure that events were either not mentioned or reported in a fashion favourable to the regime. By ordering the publication of previously prepared articles they directly influenced what was covered by the media and in what way (Sükösd, 2000). A means of control over the *nomenklatura* system was to keep files on every journalist with sensitive personal and political information. The information kept in these files directly influenced the choice of journalists for leadership positions (Sükösd, 2000). This led to ridiculous situations. As remembered by Rainer Höhling (Interview Höhling, 26.2.2008), statements that came

directly from politburo members in the GDR, particularly Honecker, were released by the ADN no matter if a sentence made no sense or were grammatically incorrect, as the editors did not dare change anything.

A further instrument for media control were journalism schools. Usually, access to a leading position within the media required the candidate to come from these schools (Sükösd, 2000). Here, the journalists were indoctrinated with communist propaganda, and following the Leninist philosophy of the press, were taught to be “The party’s sharpest weapon” (Lendvai, 1981, pg 17). In order to be able to visit these schools and later to succeed in the media, candidates usually had to be members of the communist party, required to obey and follow party directives. The case of the GDR represented a slightly different picture, as will still be discussed.

Political control over the media was regularly reinforced by political terror and purges of leading media individuals. All this created a situation where on the one hand the regime directly interfered in the media system, and on the other hand, journalists themselves feared not confirming with the official line. Not wanting to give anyone reason to doubt the own conformity, the journalists often became overzealous in implementing the party line. Thus, centralized, close control over the media was secured by a mixture of direct censorship, self censorship, direct appointment, or sacking of media *nomeklatura* as well as political terror (Sükösd, 2000).

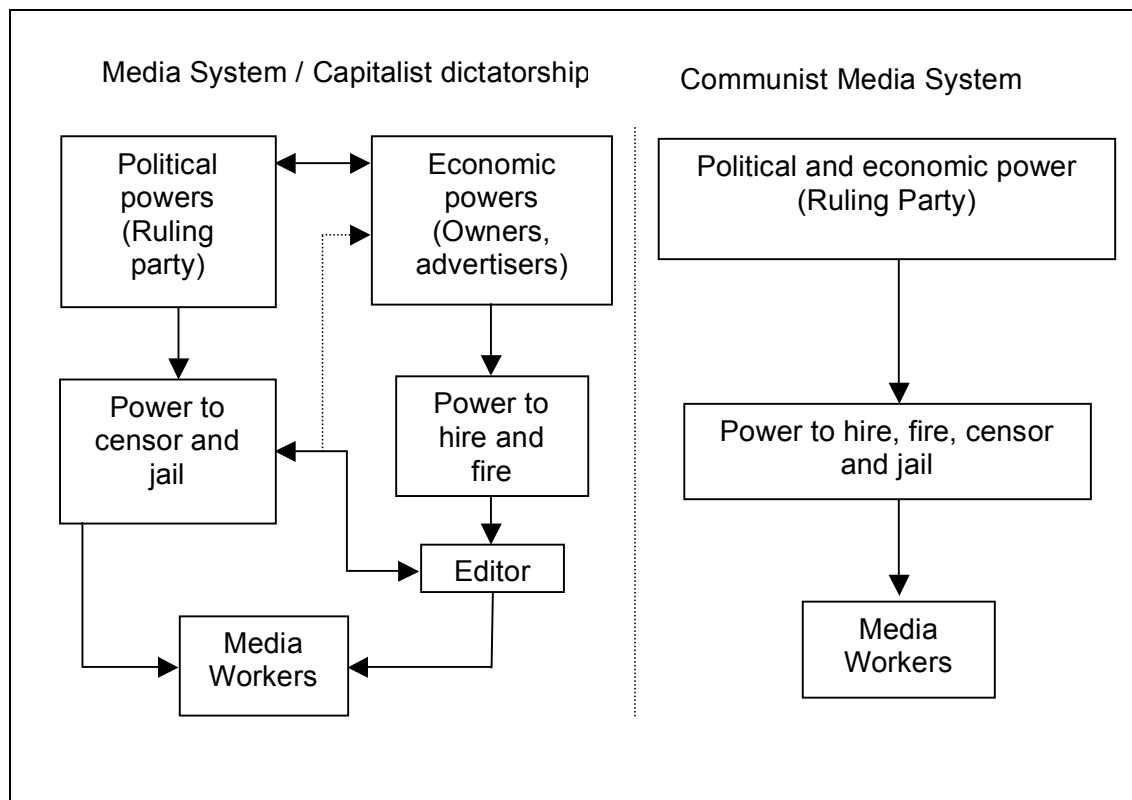
The process of divergent paths undertaken by various national regimes as a consequence of de-Stalinization, national uprisings and demonstrations in the 1950s and 60s, as identified previously, also had an effect on the way the national media systems began to function. The media in all countries of the soviet sphere of influence differed enormously from their role in any western democracy, institutionally the media belonging tightly under the control of the party throughout the entire region. Nevertheless, considerable differences considering the extent of control, censorship and self-censorship among Central and Eastern European Countries emerged. This is especially the case for the countries of research.

### 3. The position of the Media in transition processes

As has already been established, the role and position of the Media in transition processes – especially from State socialism – represents a largely neglected field of research in both political and communication sciences. This section of the dissertation shall look at one aspect of the medias position in the transition process, namely the new economic reality that the journalists and the individual media had to adapt to, following the disintegration of the party state system. This is important, as it suggests why the media systems are not only different in Communist dictatorships as opposed to Capitalist dictatorships, but it also suggests how the media were able to influence the democratization processes.

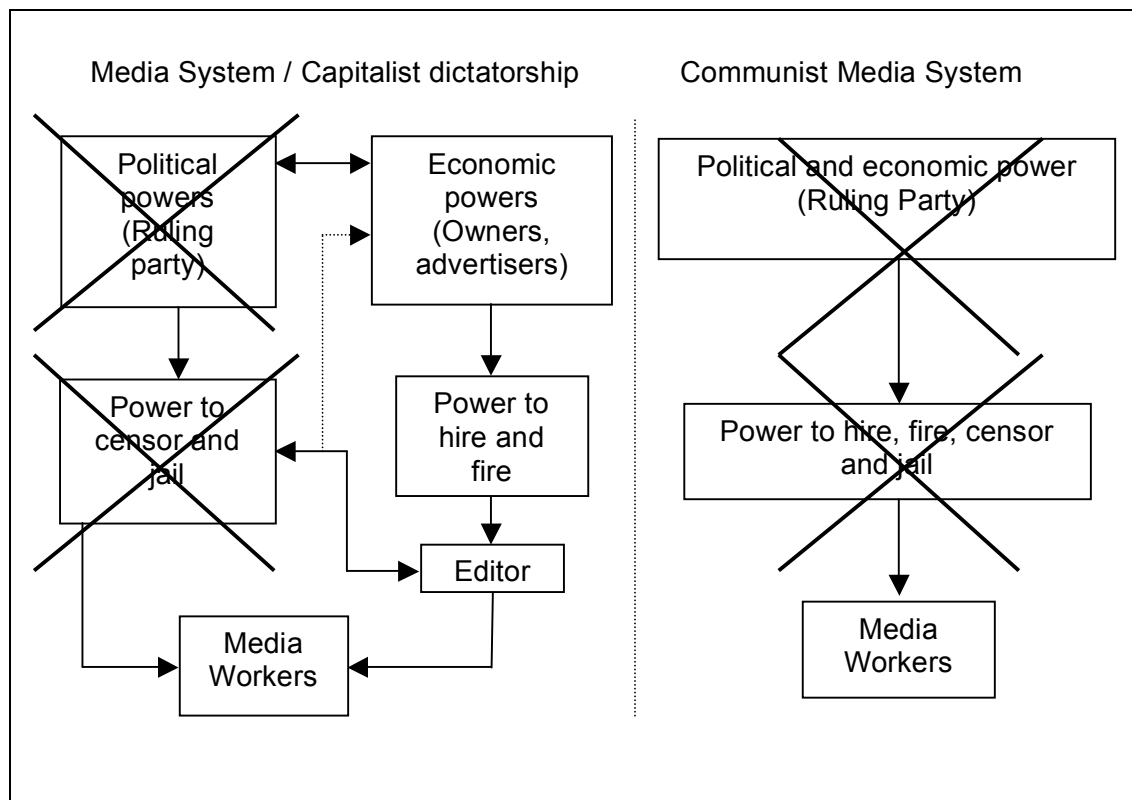
In his article “Democratization and the Media: A preliminary discussion of experiences in Europe and Asia“, Collin Sparks (2001) compares Media systems in Capitalists dictatorships to Communist dictatorships. He suggests that as the economic ownership of the media in both systems differ - in communism all forms of official media belonging directly to the one party-state; while in capitalist dictatorships the media, although being subject to censorship, nevertheless belongs to a private individual -, the form of censorship in a communist system remains in effect much more strongly totalitarian in terms of complete control. (See graph below). Under a communist dictatorship, from the bottom journalists, to the top *nomeklatura* member, everyone is dependent on the party. Additionally, while capitalist media systems had to follow a market orientated media organisation and content in order to survive, media systems in communist systems remained non-commercial. The state provided everything from the journalist’s salaries, to office rent and stationary. The media did not need to successfully meet the demands of their readers to survive; no matter how many people read their news, they were kept alive by the regime. Hence, the media did not have “to compete through credibility for the public’s confidence” (Lendvai, 1981, pg 22). It is suggested by the article that this affected the output of the media in the respective system, as a commercialised logic would limit the extent of ideological / propagandist elements in the media.





(Sparks, 2001, pg 22)

Sparks argues that the effect of regime collapse on the media in a communist dictatorship is very different to that of its capitalist counterpart. In the former the end of the regime brings a complete vacuum, as the level which was responsible for hiring and firing as well as for censoring and for providing the economic structure no longer exists; while in the latter, although the political restrictions are no longer in place, the restrictions placed on the journalists and editors by the owners still are largely in place (see graph below). Sparks argues that in the former, when the respective system enters crisis “both the internal and external mechanisms of control vanishes, and there is a vacuum of ownership..... The media workers suddenly find themselves free to express themselves, to pursue their own interests, to tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future – for a short period of time, there is no one to tell them what to do” (Sparks, 2001, pg 22) It is important to highlight, however, that in the view of this dissertation the freedom of media workers to “pursue their own interests, to tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future” only exist for a short period of time and ends while the existing regime is still in place, albeit extensively weakened, before the new system is constituted.



(Sparks, 2001, pg 23)

It is in the above-pictured environment that the media and its journalists can position themselves as independent actors in the reform process taking place. This dissertation presumes that by 1989, the economic logic (existing in capitalist systems), which increasingly became part and parcel of the new medias logic in communist states, increasingly placed the pre-conditions of the medias work more in line with the situation of the media in a capitalist dictatorship during regime collapse. As the media began facing economic constraints and in the case of Hungary underwent privatization or self-privatization (in which the editors create an own publishing house) and in the case of the GDR –with the exception of the ND which remained part of the SED-PDS – were placed in a trust to be sold during this period, media workers faced similar economic restrictions, as was the case in capitalist dictatorships.

Sparks argues in his paper that both post-communist regimes as well as post-capitalist dictatorships demonstrate extraordinary similarities in that they are both highly commercialised and highly politicised (Sparks, 2001, pg 24). Different to Sparks, however, this dissertation presumes that this commercialization began already before the new system was created. Therefore, while acknowledging the short window of opportunity in which the journalists can act freely, at the same time, this dissertation presumes that this situation is replaced by the new economic thinking not with the beginning of a new system,

but still at the end of the communist system. Thus, as the economic conditions were changing – bringing a shift away from an economically virtually unrestricted standing, to a situation of competition and economic restrictions – the newspapers and journalists realized that they needed public acceptance and consequently interesting, new topics if they wanted any chance of economic survival. They were suddenly faced with the need to compete “through credibility for the public’s confidence” (Lendvai, 1981, pg 22). The dissertation therefore presumes that the media and its journalists firstly began influencing the democratization process in a way as “to tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future”, but then this quickly changed to influencing the democratization process out of an economic logic.

If this is confirmed by the dissertation research findings, it will be interesting to see which influence was more beneficial to the transformation process. Assuming that the medias influence on the democratization process arises partly out of a competitive market orientated reality, and if it holds true that the media began to follow this market orientation already before a new democratic system emerged, then this dissertation presumes that this commercialised and politicised media will be a driving force in the content output of the respective media in the transformation process.

Gulyás (2003)(see graph below) argues that commercialization of the print media occurred quickly in Central and Eastern Europe as a result of system change. She describes commercialization of the press as “a process whereby the emphasis on market share and profitability in media production becomes predominant potentially at the expense of other media functions such as political, social and cultural roles (Gulyás, 2003, pg 84). The graph depicts differences in the working mode of Post-communist media in comparison to Communist media. If one assumes that these changes occurred due to a commercialization and one further assumes that this already took place before the new system was constituted, then one would expect to find parts of the depicted “Post-Communist” working mode already present in the media system during the liberalization phase of the party state. Due to the chaotic state in which many regimes found themselves in at the end of the 1980s, one would expect that the party’s capability to assert the political interest is enormously limited.

	<b>Communist print media</b>	<b>Post-Communist print media</b>
<i>Main functions of print media</i>	Dominance of political and educational functions of media over entertainment and commercial aims	Dominance of market and commercial aims generally, but in certain sectors political and social functions are more important
<i>Main forces</i>	Dominance of political forces,	Dominance of market forces, but in

	bureaucratic coordination and central planning	some sectors political and social forces are significant
<i>State involvement</i>	Extensive; including state ownership, overseeing the operation, production and distribution of all print media products, providing substantial subsidies, carrying out media control	Limited to certain areas, including involvement in politically, socially or culturally important areas, some state support to those areas: carrying out some media control
<i>Roles and behaviours of print media companies</i>	Main aims are recognition of the authorities and to fulfil central orders and plans; budget limits are soft, usually receives subsidies; price of its product is decided by the authorities; demand is certain for the company	Main aims are commercial and/ or some social/political aims; budget limits are hard, usually has to cover costs; usually do not receive substantial external support; price of its products decided by the company subject to market condition; demand is uncertain for the company depending on market conditions
<i>Media control</i>	Extensive, including control of content, production and distribution of print media products; formal and informal control mechanisms; no diversity, no press freedom	Within limits of pluralistic systems; mainly formal mechanisms; usually written in legislation; typically involving control of content for social and security reasons, and of production for economic reasons; freedom of the press is largely respected

(Source: Gulyás, 2003, pg 83)

#### 4. The role of the Media in democratic systems

When at the end of the 1980s, the communist grip on power throughout Central and Eastern Europe began eroding, increasingly the respective regimes embarked on a process of liberalization. To this process belonged the attempt by young, softline regime members, to distance themselves from the previous leadership and what had happened before. In the GDR people like Egon Krenz, Günter Schabowski and Gregor Gysi, in Hungary Imre Pozsgay, Miklós Nemeth and Rezső Nyers all attempted to portray themselves as reformers in line with Mikhail Gorbachev, claiming to build a truly democratic socialist system on the ideals of people such as Alexander Dubček and Imre Nagy. This notion of striving to create a “truly democratic socialist state” went hand in hand with the notion of a free press. Consequently, although reluctant, each respective regime had to give in to both the opposition’s demands to stop media censorship and the journalists’ actions in beginning to take more liberties, if they wanted to appear to follow the ideals of a truly democratic socialist state. Additionally, in Hungary (as will still be

discussed) some regime members pushed for media freedom in the hope that this would outmanoeuvre the hard-line regime members, would speed up the liberalization process they began as well as portray them as true reformers. In the GDR the regime members of the “bloc-parties” did the same, positioning themselves for a possible end to the dominance of the SED. Additionally, the journalists of both the “bloc-parties” as well as the SED media, began to foster an internal party liberalization process.

Hence, although this was a long process that sometimes lasts until today, the media in the countries of the region more and more acquired the role of the media in established democracies. If one acknowledges that a part of this occurred while the regime was still in place, before democratic elections took place, then one needs to analyse the role of the media in democratic systems if one wants to understand the role the media could play in the final phase of the communists regimes.

“Mass Media” are repeatedly referred to as the “fourth power” or “fourth estate”<sup>1</sup> in democratic systems due to the power they exert, the supervisory function they exercise and the forum and source for public debate and information they offer. As such, they have become “the connective tissue of democracy” (Gunther & Mughan, 2000, pg 1), linking the sovereign (the people) with each other as well as with the elected representatives and offering a watchdog function for the people on decisions made by those in power by popular will. In many respects, a free press makes sure that accountable government can indeed be controlled and made accountable. As argued by Holmes, free press is “an essential instrument of self-rule, providing voters with indispensable information about candidates and issues” (Holmes, 1990, pg 35). As a consequence, Thomas Jefferson famously declared: “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter” (Quoted in Krinsky, 1997, page 1). Abraham Lincoln stated: “Let the people know the facts, and the country will be safe” (Quoted in Cornyn, 2004, page 1). Additionally, the media are seen as a mirror of what is important for society at that time. This in a twofold way: firstly, they should become a platform for discussion on issues important to people of society and which these want discussed. Secondly, to return to the “agenda-setting function”, the media serve as a filter on discussions in society and should in theory take the most important up, convey them to their readers thus defining the most important social and political issues.

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<sup>1</sup> A term coined by Lord Macaulay in 1832, to describe the emergence of the press to rival the power of the other three great estates, that was the Lords, both temporal and spiritual, and the Commons (Quoted in Randall, 1998). Today it refers to the press, both in its explicit capability of advocacy and in its implicit to frame political issues.

Modern-day democracies are witnessing criticisms of the media regarding a growing commercialization (the media increasingly adapting to market demands), sensationalism and superficiality bringing a growing amount of “poli-tainment” instead of non-biased, important information. Increasingly, scholars tend to criticise its perceived influence on the political system, especially on election campaigns. According to some critics, the media have changed the political process by turning politics into a market like game (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) (See also, Entman, 1989; Jamieson, 1992). Subsequently, political subjects are often reported on according to the amount of consumer interest they can bring. Additionally, as the main preferences of the audiences clearly goes towards entertainment, one can observe a change towards the “entertainization” (Meyer, 2001) of information transmitted through the media.

This increasing commercialization of the media also occurred in the area of research, and it is a point of this dissertation to suggest that this occurred already before the respective regime collapsed. Indeed, today Central and Eastern Europe belongs to the most commercialized media landscapes, critics increasingly pointing to a deteriorated journalistic standard as sensationalism and “instinct-entertainment” (Interview József Kajdi, 01.04.2008) dominate the amount of “news” communicated. When analysing the role of the media in the area of research, if one accepts that this process of commercialization already set in during the last phases of the communist regimes, one therefore also needs to keep in mind the negative aspects brought by the media in following sensational aspects. Nevertheless, these surely gradually developed and were not as present in 1989 – 1990, and are not as such the topic of research of this dissertation that looks more at the positive role of the media in democratization processes.

#### **IV. The GDR**

Already prior to the end of WWII, the Allies had agreed during talks at Teheran (1943) and Yalta (1945) that following defeat, Germany should be divided into four zones of occupation. By April 1945, divergences quickly became apparent between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Zone the licensing of political parties was quickly permitted, to a great extent in order to legitimize the formation and activities of the German Communist party (KPD) (Fulbrook, 1990). The Soviet military administration actively advanced control of the KPD over political affairs in the Soviet zone, the KPD thus effectively exerting influence out of proportion of their actual support and strength in the population (Ibid). After it became apparent that the KPD could not attract enough support on their own, a forced merger between the Social Democrats (SPD) in the Soviet Zone and the KPD took place, forming the so-called Socialist Unity Party (SED). By 1948, the other parties in the Soviet Zone including the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPD) and the Peasants' Party (DBD) had effectively been brought under control of the SED. In the meantime, the grand wartime alliance was further crumbling, culminating in the Berlin Blockade and subsequent airlift of 1948-49, as a result of which the division of Germany was formalised by 1949; In May 1949 with the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and in October 1949 with the creation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

The East-German dictatorship relied strongly on widespread participation at lower levels, right down to organizational strategies in the workplace and residential areas, to bring across its messages and realize its policies. This reliance on the grass-roots participation needed a considerable interpenetration of 'state' and 'civil society' (Fulbrook, 1995). Here the block parties and mass organizations were to play an important role, intended to reach parts of society that the SED could not reach. As argued by Fulbrook: "The East German dictatorship was sustained by an open edifice of affiliated bloc parties and mass organizations, which co-operated with SED and the Stasi to seek to incorporate every last citizen in the organized life of state and society. There was to be no area of 'civil society', no 'public sphere' beyond the reach of state control: every aspect of life, work, and leisure in East-Germany was to be under control, ultimately, of the communist state" (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 58).

The continuation of these "block-parties" as junior-partners in the government with

specified number of seats allocated to them in parliament, represents a strange development, and stands out in comparison to other socialist states where other parties were banned. On the one hand these parties were largely marginalised, cooperation forced on their leaders in the Soviet later Stasi prison of *Hohenschönhausen*, and in effect they were no more than “puppet parties” strictly following the SED’s policies. As argued by Elke Bötcher, the majority of opposition activists did not really trust the “bloc-parties”, as they represented the position of the regime. They were not really a junior-partner in the government, as they had nothing to say in reality, representing a “*pseudo demokratische Veranstaltung*” (Interview Bötcher, 19.3.2008).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, however, they did nevertheless represent a different spirit to that of the SED. Reiprich (Interview Reiprich, 20.5.2008) here talks of a “middle-class hibernation-niche” (*Restbürgerliche Überwinterungsnische*), where a “different spirit existed” and in which people entered if they could not withdraw from the pressure to conform to the state and the system completely. Membership in these parties was a weak but nevertheless possible way to express opposition to the SED, while at the same time being prepared to be part of the system as long as no alternative appeared possible. As argued by Fulbrook “Membership of these parties was extremely useful for those East Germans who could not bring themselves to join an avowedly communist party, but who nonetheless wished to show their commitment to building a better, anti-fascist German state” (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 59). It was a way to demonstrate conformity, while at the same time showing a minimum of opposition.

From the very beginning, these block parties were allowed, or even initiated, by the SED leadership in an attempt to reach all segments of society. These parties were then instrumentalized as “transmission belts” between the SED and different subsections of the population (Fulbrook, 1990) in order to translate the SED language intelligibly to distinctive segments who were sceptical of anything with an openly communist stamp on it (Fulbrook, 1995).

While the CDU and the LDPD were intended to incorporate the middle-class and liberal segments of society, the SED directly founded the nationalist NDPD and the peasants’ DBD in order to incorporate former Nazis (in the case of the NDPD) and to create an SED loyal alternative to the CDU and LDPD for entrepreneurial farmers in rural areas (in the case of the DBD). The benefit of creating another alternative to the CDU and the LDPD,

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the only time that there was ever a vote against a government decision prior to 1989 was in 1972, when fourteen CDU members of parliament voted against the proposed abortion measures (Fulbrook, 1990, pg 226)



was that it further fragmentised these two and it incorporated even more parts of the population in the system. As suggested by Fulbrook, these parties had been founded “precisely in order to encompass and contain segments of the population to which communist ideas could not be expected to appeal” (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 58). A leaflet circulated by the NDPD in 1952, for example, with the title *“Ruf an die deutsche Frontgeneration des zweiten Weltkrieges”*, used evocative language to appeal to the sense of “Love for and allegiance to our common fatherland”, listing among its signatories such former devoted Nazis as a former district leader of the NSDAP and a former member of the NS-women’s organization and war widow (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 58). Such attempts promised political salvation for ordinary former Nazis if they were prepared to put their love for the fatherland to the shared new purpose.

As long as the SED power looked here to stay, as long as no political alternative looked reachable, these block parties effectively remained the instruments and mouthpieces for the SED. However, due to very fact that these parties did attract people who did not support the SED dominance completely and where as Reiprich argued a “different spirit existed”, it was these parties who quickly came to oppose the regime once the first cracks in the absolute power of the SED became visible. Thus, these parties and their respective media would later play an important role in the democratization process, as they had the infrastructure, the organisation and the personnel to effectively oppose the system. Indeed, it was the block party CDU which emerged as dominant force after the first free elections in 1990, albeit with considerable support from the West-German sister party. It appears surprising that (with some small exceptions such as the group 20 in Dresden) it was these “block-parties” and not the new opposition groups who emerged as leading figures directly following the 1990 elections. The group 20 managed to provide Lord Mayors in Dresden and to influence the politics of the state of Saxony in the 15 years following unification. Today, however, they too seem to have disappeared. This stands in contrast to the Hungarian example, where the political landscape today is dominated by the post-communists on the one hand, but on the other the conservative FIDESZ and MDF as well as the liberal SZDSZ, who all formed in 1988/89 as opposition groups.

## **1. The Media in the GDR**

In the GDR as in all countries under Soviet hegemony, the centralized communist regime under Walter Ulbricht began with the monopolization of the press almost immediately. The political elite understood the value of the newspaper as a means of schooling the public in

the basics of Marxist ideology and more practically, of casting in a favourable light on selected government policies. The responsibilities of the journalists clearly lay in educating the public in the „right“ way. Therefore, until the very end, whoever wanted to receive a slightly higher position in most occupational fields, needed to subscribe to one of the big newspapers. This should make sure that these individuals received the state propaganda. In certain businesses, reading hours were introduced where the employees had to read the GDR newspapers. Licenses for media were only given to parties and mass-organisations favourable to the communist regime. Ownership of previously active newspapers, or publishing houses were expropriated.

From the very beginning the GDR was faced with a major obstacle in controlling the flow of information to its citizens, namely the GDR's geographical proximity to West Germany. Apart from the Island of Rügen or the region of Dresden (referred to as the "Tal der Ahnungslosen"), West German radio and TV could be received all over the GDR. Additionally, West Germany made an active effort through strong transmitters to broadcast both TV and Radio to East Germany. The GDR authorities at first attempted to prevent citizens from using West-German media, either through police controls or by trying to make GDR programmes more interesting. By the 1970s, however, this policy was no longer implemented as rigorously, in part because the new leadership under Honecker (Gerlach, 1991) noticed how futile it was, as it created enormous animosities to the people, and as through the creation of the Berlin wall the regime believed that it had stabilised the socialist system in the country (Kaase, 2000). As a result, as argued by Stiehler (1990), people in the GDR used more West German than East German Radio and TV. Consequently, East Germans were exposed to a lot of manifest and latent counter system information long before unification (Kaase, 2000). As aptly argued by Kasse, in Germany every night, electronic reunification happened through the TV (Ibid).

On the long run, there is no doubt that this played a dominant role in accelerating the process of regime de-legitimization, at least in so far as it constantly gave a different interpretation to the propaganda released by the regime. This was also remembered by Dr. Monika Zimmermann (Interview Dr. Zimmermann, 18.3.2008), one of the few accredited western journalists inside the GDR between 1987-90. She suggests that in comparison to other communist states, the press landscape inside the GDR was never independent from the press landscape of West-Germany. Especially the west-German electronic media constantly reverberated into the GDR.

This also had an effect on the relatively little amount of *Samizdat* literature, especially in

comparison to neighbouring Poland. The need for this was simply not as present, as one free media system was already constantly bombarding the East Germans with alternative news, news especially relevant for the GDR's citizen and where East-German dissidents themselves published articles or news coverage's.

The workers uprising in the GDR in 1953 did not have the same effect in terms of bringing a liberalization in society through the regime, as did the revolution in 1956 in the case of Hungary (as will still be discussed). Quite on the contrary, once the soviets re-asserted their power, the GDR regime continued to stick firmly to Stalinist orthodoxy until late into 1989. This also had an effect on the media. Although in 1968, the GDR witnessed a revision of the constitution, which *de jure* gave the press the same rights as in the FRG, the constitutional practice looked very different. *De facto*, until 1989, the media in the GDR represented the traditional picture of the media in an East European Communist State, following Stalinist principles, where all media served as the central organ of communication of the SED party-state, attempting to use the media in order to reinforce political control. There existed little easing of control over the Media, which remained strictly controlled by "hardliners" until the fall of Honecker in October 1989. As a result, many people inside the GDR simply withdrew from following the newspaper coverage. The fact that there existed an other German media landscape in West Germany, which constantly provided critical information, greatly facilitated this retreat.

For the outside world, even in socialist "brother states", the GDR's media system represented a shocking form of severe control and censorship, in which the journalists until the very end appeared to follow the official stance. As argued by András Heltai-Hopp, for the journalists of the other socialist states, the submission of the entire media system in the GDR appeared unexplainable, especially after what had happened in Germany under Nazi dictatorship (Interview, Heltai-Hopp, 2008). As argued by Wolfgang Thierse, most journalists were perceived as being cowards and dishonest, thus portrayed the required system-traits for their careers: *„Die meisten DDR-Journalisten waren feige und verlogen, hatten also die erforderlichen System-Eigenschaften für ihre Karriere.“* (Interview Wolfgang Thierse, 14.4.2008).

For the majority of observers, this could only be explained by the situation that the entire media system was run and operated by fervent communist hardliners. However, at closer look, one sees that this was not the case. Although the entire party state was obviously dominated by the SED (and here undoubtedly by SED hardliners until October 1989), the individual "block-parties" controlled their own newspapers, as was the case with the "Neue

Zeit". This was different to the other socialist states, where all media effectively belonged to the state or the party. Even in Hungary, where the Magyar Nemzet belonged to the collective "Popular front" organisations, in 1989 in effect it was controlled by the reform-minded politburo member Imre Pozsgay, in his position of head of the popular front organisations.

Thus, while SED-party membership might have been beneficial for a career inside the SED-party media and state owned media, such as the „Neues Deutschland“ or the ADN, in the media of the "block-parties", the higher ranking *nomeklatura* were mostly members of the respective parties. These journalists, although surely by no means being over-critical towards the regime and the system, were at the same time no over-enthusiastic communists. Obviously, the SED could intervene and controlled the appointment of these leading figures. As stated by Manfred Gerlach, Chairman of the LDPD between 1967 and 1990, and Chairman of the Council of State and thus *de jure* head of state between December 6<sup>th</sup> 1989, to April 5<sup>th</sup> 1990, all personnel or structural decisions within the block party media (including decisions concerning the media *nomeklatura*) needed to be approved by the SED. As argued by Vaatz, in the end all personnel decisions of the "block-parties" had to receive green light from the Central Committee. Responsible for this was Horst Dohlus (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008). The "block-parties" were controlled by the department "friendly parties" of the SED; *"Befreundete Parteien"*. There the leaders of the block parties were regularly "guests", during which the decisions of the politburo were communicated, "recommendations" for the work of the respective block parties were made and speeches and media releases of the block parties were approved. In this department each "block-party" had one specific contact person, and important decisions were sent to them beforehand for approval (Gerlach, 1991, pg 79). If an important political decision was to be made, the leaders of the block parties were instructed to write supportive commentaries in their respective media. Gerlach (Gerlach, 1991, pg 125) remembers that, when in 1971, Honecker took over the leadership from Walter Ulbricht, Gerlach was instructed to write a positive article on Honecker in the CDU's newspapers, as the two had known each other for several years. Honecker had always appeared to be in the shadow of Ulbricht, an *apparatchik* nobody really knew. If he wanted to retain control, Honecker needed to quickly change this and the block party leaders were instructed to support the cause.

The above-described situation was the case for the block party leadership. As to the media *nomeklatura* of the block party media, a similar procedure took place with the department agitation and propaganda. The Chief-editors of the Block party media received detailed

„recommendations“ by the Agitation and Propaganda department weekly. (This department remained strictly controlled by hardliners until October 1989). Should the editors then ignore the department's „recommendations“ – even if this occurred through an obvious mistake – the respective editor faced tough disciplinary measures, even leading to a so called „*Berufsverbot*“ after which the respective journalist was barred from a further job in the media, or merely received a position in the archives. Additionally, the SED was responsible for dictating how much resources (financial but also working essentials such as paper and printing machines) each newspaper received. In this way, the SED could directly dictate the circulation number of the newspapers. If a newspaper became too liberal, then the circulation was reduced thus fostering a system of self-censorship if one did not want to loose access to resources.

Generally, the “Neues Deutschland” was to act as guide on what the block party media were allowed to write. This is suggested by a paper instructing the CDU-papers on how to comment on the visit of Honecker to West-Germany in August 1989:

*„Es wird empfohlen, über die Pressekonferenz auf Seite 1 zu berichten. Das ND (Neues Deutschland sdw) wird das Dokument im Wortlaut veröffentlichen. Wir sollten Auszüge aus dem Dokument im Wortlaut in gebührender Länge bringen (keine ganze Zeitungsseite)! ND bringt zu dem Thema am 29.8. einen Kommentar. Auf der Grundlage dieses Kommentars sollte man anschließend selber kommentieren“ (Holzweißig, 1997, pg 78)*

In effect, as argued by Müller, concerning the “Neues Deutschland”, the real Chief-Editor was Honecker (Interview Müller, 2005, page 2). And indeed, as the above situation portrays, this argument holds true for the entire media system. The SED de facto controlled the media landscape from the outside.

Additionally, secret *Stasi* agents were placed in these newspapers by the regime. Sometimes people guessed who these agents were, but as would later be uncovered, mostly these agents remained unnoticed. Although not officially stated, all journalists knew of the presence of these agents, which increased the system of self-censorship as one never knew who would report what.

To conclude, the media *nomenklatura* of the block party media were thus controlled on the one hand by their own party leadership (who were in return controlled by the SED department “friendly parties”) and on the other directly by the SED department Agitation

and Propaganda. It is important to mention at this point again, that the journalists who worked for these block newspapers often explicitly chose to become a member of these “block-parties” as oppose to the SED, as it was a weak but nevertheless possible way to express opposition to the SED, while at the same time being prepared to be part of the system as long as no alternative appeared possible. This situation would become important during the transition phase, when these parties increasingly began to position themselves against the SED. (See the subsequent chapter). As long as the party state system worked, the SED could control these parties and their media by influencing who would become party chief of the respective party, who in turn decided on personnel decisions in cooperation with the responsible SED department.

While the “*Neue Zeit*” was a CDU block-party newspaper, the „*Neues Deutschland*“ was directly founded in order to create an organ for the party. As argued by Benning, its focus lay in providing the masses of the party members arguments and prove of the correctness of the GDR politics every day. “...*die Masse der Parteimitgliedertäglich aufs neue mit Argumenten und Beweisen für die Richtigkeit er Politik auszurüsten*” (Benning, 1997, pg 149). By 1989, although officially belonging to the party, in effect it was the direct mouthpiece of the central committee. This was clearly portrayed by the header of the Newspaper stating “*Neues Deutschland - Organ des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*”. As remembered by Spickermann, in reality it was not even the organ of the central committee, but instead the organ of the politburo group around Honecker. Namely: Erich Mielke, Erich Honecker, Günter Mittag and Joachim Herrmann. “...*eigentlich war es zum Schluss nur noch ein Organ der Politbürogruppe um Honecker. Und das Waren Mielke, Honecker, Mittag und Herrmann. Das war der engere Zirkel, deren Organ war es zum Schluss*” (Interview Spickermann, pg 5).

## **2. Towards transition**

In 1989, the GDR represented one of the last bastions of Conservative Stalinism in Eastern Europe. The regime (especially the hardliners) it seemed, strictly controlled all aspects of society, opposition -in comparison to other socialist states - appeared negligible (Clay Large, 2001) and any drastic changes in direction of increasing liberties seemed highly unlikely. The regime believed it could withstand any calls for reform. Economically, the system was upheld through continued crucial financial support from West Germany, in form of loans, subsidies and so called “buyouts” of political prisoners (Clay Large, 2001, pg 519). Additionally, as argued by Baylis: “The SED appeared to have a more effective

repressive apparatus at its command than its neighbours, and did not suffer the open cleavages visible in the Soviet, Polish, or Hungarian parties; dissident movements appeared to be correspondingly weaker” (Baylis, 1999, pg 136). Furthermore, with most opposition dissidents having fled or forced to depart, who should lead a popular uprising against the regime?

However, the changes initiated inside the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev’s policies of *Perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness), which ultimately came to affect the entire region, came to have drastic consequences on the very existence of the GDR. Despite these extraordinary events taking place within the Soviet Union (marked among others by the declaration of Lithuanian sovereignty on May 18th 1989) as well as within several communist bloc countries, Erich Honecker’s regime failed to adapt. The SED’s opposition towards Gorbachev’s reform plans were articulated clearly by politburo member Kurt Hager in an interview for the German magazine *Stern*, by stating that if one neighbour changed his wallpaper, one does not necessarily feel obliged to do the same (Otto, 1997, quoted in Grieder, 2006, pg 164). This opposition towards any change within the system became most strongly evident during the May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1989, elections. While the Soviet Union itself had already held its first semi-open elections and Poland was about to do the same, after an increasing amount of opposition to the regime had been voiced advising the public on how to vote negatively, and while even “block-parties” such as the CDU had participated in the election organisation, witnessing negative outcomes for the regime, Egon Krenz nevertheless announced that 98.95 per cent of votes supported the government list (Stokes, 1993). Even reform minded politburo members such as Schabowski were surprised by the crude extent of this election fraud (Sieren & Koehne, 1991).

When one month later the Chinese regime forcefully crushed the demonstrations on Tiananmen Square, East German TV repeatedly showed a Chinese documentary praising the response of the army and police to the “perfidious inhumanity of the student demonstrations” (Quoted in Stokes, 1993, pg 138). On June 4<sup>th</sup>, the “Neues Deutschland” defended the decisions taken by the Chinese leadership. The extent of the election fraud and disregard of the public discontent following it, as well as the reaction of the GDR regime to the events in China, confirmed the people’s fears that for the SED elite the time of change had not yet come. Many believed that the regime would see itself legitimized to react by force against any such events inside the GDR.

The regime did not want to publicly oppose Moscow’s reform process, however, they did

everything to prevent reform influences from reaching the East-German public. In 1987, the politburo passed a resolution specifying that speeches of reform communists within the Soviet bloc, including Gorbachev's, should be censored before they be published in the DDR media (Grieder, 2006). Additionally, liberal newspapers and magazines from friendly "brother states" such as the Soviet German journal "*Sputnik*" or some issues of the Hungarian Magazine "*Magyarország*", were banned. Furthermore, Erich Honecker wanted to prevent a societal discussion on *Stalinism*, as he did not want a discussion on the GDR's own repressive history (Grieder, 2006). In 1988, Honecker informed the Soviet ambassador to East Berlin, that the term *Perestroika* would no longer be included in official documents released from Moscow and published in the GDR (Ibid).

Several factors were working against the political stability of the GDR. One of the foremost factors was surely the change in Moscow's policies towards its satellite states, shifting from the "Brezhnev doctrine" to the "Sinatra doctrine", implying that the Soviet Union would no longer interfere in the policies of its satellite states, which would henceforth be free to do it "their way". As argued by Pallack, "the Soviet Union's refusal to guarantee the GDR's existence played a pivotal role in its destabilization" (Pallack, 2002, pg 309). No matter how strong the GDR leadership attempted to shield its population from Moscow's reform plans, in the end it failed and the new realities emerging within the Soviet bloc had devastating consequences for the East German system. Increasingly, seeing the changes occurring in other socialist states (such as the victory of the Solidarity trade Union during the partially free elections in Poland of June 1989), and acknowledging Moscow's new policy of non-interference, people inside the GDR began demanding similar changes as were taking place elsewhere in the region. This together with a general dissatisfaction with the GDR's system evident even among party members, as well as a looming economic crisis, laid the foundations for the sudden but complete breakdown of the GDR state.

With the increasing gap in the standard of living between eastern and western Europe, the west increasingly became an over idealized alternative. With over 1 million East Germans visiting West Germany annually, as well as the images of the western life entering the living rooms of East Germany via television daily, dissatisfaction with the GDR grew drastically. Additionally, while the GDR leadership had always argued that among the Soviet bloc countries the GDR was leading especially in economic terms, by 1989, it had to realize that through the political and economic reforms in the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland, it was becoming one of the most backward (Pallack, 2002). Furthermore, the economic outlook of the GDR was in reality more than bleak. The heavy debt servicing costs which the GDR faced as a result of its heavy borrowing, the rise in oil prices and the



falling away of western markets, by the 1980s left the GDR in a state of economic implosion, marked most evidently by the billion mark loan –effectively a state bailout - given to the GDR by the FRG in 1983 and 1984. Even high party officials began complaining of consumer goods shortages (Baylis, 1999, pg 130).

Indeed, increasingly the SED leadership was faced with a growing party discontent against its hardline policies. A growing number of high SED members recognized that drastic reforms had become inevitable. In May 1988, Gerhard Schürer, head of the State Planning commission and a candidate member of the politburo, drafted a paper outlining drastic measures in order to prevent a financial breakdown of the GDR economy. These measures included slashing subsidies, cutting spending and raising prices (Baylis, 1999, pg 134). Fearing that these measures would lead to a drastic fall in the already low living standards, bringing mass public discontent, Honecker and his hardline economic advisor, Günter Mittag, criticised these ideas, and ignored them. Certainly, as argued by Kopstein, in 1989 Reforms “seemed to be both necessary and unimaginable” (Kopstein, 1997, pg 104).

The direct spark of the 1989 revolution in East Germany arguably came as a result of the regime decisions in Hungary and developments in the West German Embassies in Prague and Warsaw, leading to a rather unexpected refugee problem. In March 1989, the Hungarian reformist government announced it was acceding unconditionally to the 1951 United Nations’ Convention on Refugees (Stokes, 1993). This partly came as a step to give the Hungarian minority in Rumania that were fleeing Ceausescu’s regime at the thousands, a legitimate status in Hungary. But at the same time, having accepted these international norms, it would eventually have to recognise people wanting to flee East Germany as refugees as well. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the reformist Hungarian government dismantled the barbed-wire fence with Austria. Although still not being able to cross the “official” border crossings, many East-Germans simply abandoned their cars in the woods and walked over into Austria (Clay Large, 2001, pg 521). Others dissatisfied that they could not cross the border headed towards the Embassy of the FRG in Budapest. On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989, having been promised financial support from the West, and unwilling to uphold the GDR’s travel restrictions on its own citizens, Hungarian Foreign Minister Gyula Horn announced that East Germans may cross the border between Hungary and Austria to go to West Germany. The Hungarian regime declared that they were following internationally accepted principles of human rights. This was a novum, as all soviet bloc countries had guaranteed that they would only allow citizens of other “socialist brother states” to make for the west with valid permission. The “Neues

Deutschland” quickly condemned the Hungarian action, stating that this only came as a consequence of the Hungarian regime being “bought” by western direct financial aid. The ADN released statements speaking of a “organised human trafficking”.

The East German regime addressed Moscow for help, but Gorbachev made it clear that the “Brezhnev Doctrine” was once and for all abandoned, and that the Soviet Union would not intervene in this case. Gorbachev told his ambassador to East-Germany: “We support the GDR, but not at the cost of our interests in West Germany and Europe as a whole” (Quoted in Clay Large, 2001, pg 522). Eleven thousand people immediately took the opportunity to leave. Soon masses of East Germans followed: some left for Hungary via Czechoslovakia, whilst others headed for West German embassies in Prague and Warsaw (Fulbrook, 1990). By the end of September 1989, the situation in the embassies reached crisis proportions. As Stokes argues: “Climbing over walls, sitting shoulder to shoulder in the garden, almost falling out of the windows, some thirty-five hundred of them had gathered by the end of the month”(Stokes, 1993, pg 137). Desperate to get rid of the problem, Honecker agreed to allow the refugees held up in the embassies to leave for West Germany, however, as an assertion of the GDR’s sovereignty, under the condition that they leave through East Germany on sealed trains where they would then be “expelled” for humanitarian reasons. Although the regime could temporarily restrain the continual wave of emigration by closing off its eastern borders on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, on the long run this mass flight initiated the downward spiral that led to the eventual collapse of the GDR. It had a profoundly negative psychological impact on the moral of both citizens and regime. It showed even more strongly that the wall was basically a symbol for a system that could only exist if it was closed off (Jarausch, 1994). Societal organizations inside the GDR began to mushroom. The civic platform “*Demokratie jetzt*” began publicly demanding reform. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, the opposition group “*Demokratischer Aufbruch*” was formed, and the “*Neues Forum*” had applied to be officially registered as a public association. First divisions in the SED-leadership also became apparent. On September 12<sup>th</sup>, Günter Schabowski had demanded a public declaration of the party leadership in which the political and social problems be addressed. His demands were declined on the basis that such decisions could only be made while the First Secretary was present. Erich Honecker to this time had been in the Hospital, and Egon Krenz on vacation (Sieren & Koehne, 1991).

These events which were unfolding in the summer months of 1989, resulted in a growing excitement of ever more open societal discussion and debate about the sense of crisis in the GDR (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 248). People were leaving the country daily, and people

showed up to work not knowing which of their colleagues had fled in the meantime or they were contemplating with their families whether they too should leave. As suggested by Fulbrook, this discussion on whether to leave or to stay prompted questions of what they could do to make the GDR a place in which people would be willing to stay, instead of simply leaving. Hence, there was no longer any possibility of containing public debate; of retaining the complicity of the niche society. Fulbrook argues that this was perhaps the crucial mobilizing factor (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 248).

In the Meantime, ignoring the problems of his country, Honecker proceeded with plans to celebrate the GDR's fortieth anniversary in October 1989. As argued by Stokes: "Of all the public celebrations that modern authoritarian states have forced on its people, none were as surrealistic as this fortieth anniversary. With his countrymen fleeing by the tens of thousands, the question of German unification peeking out from behind the rostrum, and political opposition swelling, the ailing Honecker paraded around East Berlin with a Soviet leader who told him 'life punishes those who come too late' (Stokes, 1993, pg 139). This statement directly implied that if the GDR would not initiate instant reforms they would suffer the consequences. Additionally, Gorbachev told East Germans: "If you want democracy, take it and it will be yours" (Grieder, 2006, pg 167). For many demonstrators already shouting "Gorbi, Gorbi", this was the final signal that the Soviet leadership was actually supporting a direct confrontation with the SED regime.

On the streets the numbers of people demonstrating increased dramatically. On Monday October 9<sup>th</sup>, a mass demonstration of over 50,000 people was announced in Leipzig. Many feared that should the state attempt to intervene, the demonstration would become violent. That night, leaving the notorious Church of St. Nikolai in Leipzig, protestors met no resistance from the security services. No one was arrested, and the police allowed the marchers to pass. At this point it seems that the regime lost any remaining authority. Stokes suggests that it was the moment that the SED lost control of East Germany (Stokes, 1993). Argued by Clay Large (2001, pg 525) "at this point, their victory in the battle for Leipzig was a victory in the war for the future of Germany." The events in Leipzig had shown to many that the security forces would not intervene, that the people were free to voice their opposition. As a result, no longer fearing state reprisals, crowds began gathering across more GDR cities.

The consequence was revolution, not by an opposition but instead by "an entire people" (Stokes, 1993, pg 140). From this moment onwards one could also observe a change in the demands of the people. Fulbrook suggests that at the beginning, a growing number of

groups inside the GDR, the largest of which was *Neues Forum*, wanted to confront directly and overtly the problem of why so many East Germans wanted to leave, instead of simply attempting to prevent them from leaving. A main aspect of these early voices for reform was the rejection of the West German system, and the demand to create some form of “humane, non-Stalinist, truly democratic socialism” (Fulbrook, 1990, pg 242). The *Neues Forum* claimed it had no intention of becoming a political opposition. It simply wanted “a democratic dialogue about the tasks of the constitutional state, the economy, and of culture” (Quoted in Stokes, 1993, pg 139). After Gorbachev’s visit, however, and after the demonstrations of October 9th, the demands of the people seemed to change and no longer corresponded with the aims of the forming oppositional groups. Instead of chanting: “We are the people”, the slogan changed to “We are one people”, ultimately aiming at economical and political unification with the FRG, which meant the destruction of the very existence of the GDR. Additionally, the people increasingly made it clear that they did not simply desire to leave; instead they wanted to stay, engage in a dialogue with the regime and initiate change. Instead of chanting “*Wir wollen raus*” (“We want out”) the people increasingly chanted “*Wir bleiben drin*” (“We are staying here”). Other slogans included “*Gorbi!... Neues Forum zulassen! Reiht euch ein!*” (Gorbi!...Legal recognition for New Forum! Join with us!) (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 251). Additionally, a change in the demands of the emerging opposition groups could from that moment onwards be observed, now demanding an active role in the political process (Clay Large, 2001, pg 526).

This meant that, different to the majority of intellectuals inside the GDR (predominately part of the moderate opposition members), which made up a vast number of opposition leaders, the majority of people on the streets did not simply want a truly democratic GDR on the basis of a socialist style market economy, which would eventually lead to prosperity. Instead, it seems, the majority of demonstrators wanted instant unification with the FRG, in the hope to receive instant prosperity. Slogans of the demonstrators including “*Freie Wahlen – vereintes Deutschland*” (Free elections – unified Germany) made this all the more evident. This lay in stark contrast to the appeal by the *Neues Forum* on November 12<sup>th</sup> 1989:

*“Laßt euch nicht von den Forderungen nach einem politischen Neuaufbau der Gesellschaft ablenken! Ihr wurdet weder zum Bau der Mauer noch zu ihrer Öffnung befragt, laßt euch jetzt kein Sanierungskonzept aufdrängen, das uns zum Hinterhof und zur Billiglohnquelle des Westens macht! Laßt das Land nicht verhökern und euch nicht als Mietsklaven verdingen!*

*Wir werden für längere Zeit arm bleiben, aber wir wollen keine Gesellschaft haben, in der Schieber und Ellenbogentypen den Rahm abschöpfen. Ihr seid die Helden*

*einer politischen Revolution, laßt euch jetzt nicht ruhigstellen durch Reisen und schuldenerhöhende Konsumspritzen!*” (Aufruf Neues Forum 12 November 1989 nach dem Mauerfall)

It is therefore fair to conclude that while a majority of opposition elite (that is those present at the round table negotiations, but not the “block-parties”) were moderate opposition members, mostly even supporting the regimes desire to keep the GDR as a socialist state, the demonstrators on the streets were more extreme opposition members, wanting to do away with the SED, socialism and the very existence of the GDR. This became even more strongly apparent when in the beginning of 1990, a widespread demand of the demonstrators emerged which stated that either the West German D-Mark would come to them (meaning an economical unification with the FRG before a full unification took place), or that they would go to the D-Mark. It was clear to everyone that economic unification not only limited the GDR’s capability to find and implement a “third way” economy, but that in effect, it was only a small step away from full political unification. To be sure, these demands were enormously cultivated by remarks made by West-German politicians, most notably by Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who promised “*blühende Landschaften*” (“blooming landscapes”) in the East.

Overwhelmingly, the younger softline generation inside the SED, recognised that in order to prevent a complete loss of control, reforms had become inescapable. On October 18<sup>th</sup>, at a meeting of the Central Committee of the SED, Erich Honecker was replaced by Egon Krenz, who promised immediate reforms and thus initiated the “liberalization” phase. “In a frantic fortyfour days in office he fired Stalinists, visited Gorbachev, reshuffled both the Council of Ministers and his politburo, opened the Czech border, and generally beat a rapid retreat in a disorderly effort to stave off complete collapse” (Stokes, 1993, pg 140). The change in leadership, however, did not convince the majority of East Germans that the new SED regime would introduce meaningful reforms (Clay Large, 2001). For many, Krenz was not seen as a softline reformer, but instead as a continuation of the hardline fraction.

Indeed, the change of government did not prevent an escalation of protest against the SED regime. The largest demonstration of the 1989 revolution occurred on November 4th at the “*Alexanderplatz*” in East Berlin, during which over 700,000 people participated, including a prominent amount of SED members. The demonstrations on the streets in November 1989 were also a turning point, as the unrest now swept through the entire country, even to the East German capital which up to then had remained relatively calm, under close control of the state’s security services.

It is important to note that the split in the elite (attributed to being one of the preconditions for a successful political transition as identified earlier) in the GDR apparently only came after the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR, which had been accompanied and followed by widespread popular unrest. Although there had been attempts by softline members within the politburo (by people such as Günter Schabowski) to soften the standpoint of the regime, these had largely been unsuccessful. So had the signs of discontent by regional softline party leaders, such as by the SED leader of Dresden and later GDR Prime Minister Hans Modrow, who had advocated an opening on the lines of Gorbachev's "*glasnost*" and "*perestroika*". Nonetheless, when the split became evident, it did have an influence on the inner and outer stability of the regime. Important was that the split became apparent to those close to the regime (therefore the block party *nomeklatura* as well as the media *nomenklatura*) before it became apparent to the ordinary citizens and the outside world. By October, however, by the latest with the replacement of Honecker, this then also became apparent to everyone.

This split occurred in two ways:

Firstly, it occurred within the SED-leadership. There existed widespread frustration at Erich Honecker's resistance to reforms, his growing distance from – and unwillingness even to recognize – the mounting problems faced by the country, and his evident inability to deal with the refugee crisis. As argued by Fulbrook, this led to the internal coup against Honecker in October 1989 (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 259). Increasingly, Krenz and the group around him including Schabowski managed to take over control and they viewed themselves as a GDR-version of Gorbachev, believing that they could position themselves as reformers thus gaining public legitimacy. This strongly undermined the position of the hardline regime elite, and cultivated the process of the party's loss of control. For example, while Erich Honecker had instructed the security forces to act vigorously against the demonstrators, Manfred Gerlach argues that it was the "*Appell der 6*" (the plea of the 6) on October 9<sup>th</sup>, which prevented the demonstrations from becoming violent (Gerlach, 1991, pg 281). In this plea, leading softline SED politicians and moderate opposition leaders called for the demonstrations to remain peaceful. While the opposition leaders managed to keep the demonstrators at bay, Gerlach argues that it was the appeal of the SED members (which Krenz also supported) that influenced the security forces to remain calm. The statement of these clearly contradicted that of Honecker, and suggested the first public divisions within the party leadership. The statement by party softliners facilitated the non-interference on the side of the security forces. This was also strengthened by a general demoralization among many SED-members. As argued by Batt "Key groups within

the East European communist elites were demoralized by the manifest failures of their period of rule and showed clear signs of losing the sense of purpose and discipline that the ideology had provided" (Batt, 1991, pg 4). Although not as strongly evident than in other Central and Eastern European countries, research for this dissertation suggests that the argument of Batt also became evident in parts of the East-German elite (especially the lower rank and file).

Secondly, this split came as the Block parties increasingly stated their independence vis-à-vis the SED doctrine. This began already before October 1989, but with growing pressure on the regime, marked most evidently by the replacement of Honecker, these open disagreements became increasingly intense. While until 1989, the "block-parties" completely followed the SED-line (bringing them the nickname "*Blockflöte*" (Flute), hinting that these "Block-parties" were playing in tune and under direction of the SED), as of October 1989, however, these parties began to assert their own positions and views. This became apparent for example, when while Krenz was still opposing the legalisation of the *Neues Forum*, the CDU leadership sent an open letter to the interior ministry demanding that the decision to prevent the formation of the group be revised, as this decision lacked legal reasons. This letter was also printed in the "*Neue Zeit*" (Neue Zeit, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1989, pg 1).

For the majority of the people Egon Krenz did not really represent a credible alternative to the old system. Krenz, however, appeared to be the best compromise for the ailing SED-leadership, especially between "hard"- and "softliners". Other Politburo members, particularly Günter Schabowski, for the hardliners were far too reform orientated. On the other hand, someone like Mittag would have been far too "hardline" and close to Honecker to be an alternative for the "softliners" and the majority of the SED rank and file. Although Krenz agreed to the necessity of dialogue with the people in principle, his statements and actions appeared to be half-hearted at best. As argued by Pollack: "Krenz attempted to meet the demands of the population but at the same time to keep the reform process at bay" (Pollack, 2002, pg 319). Krenz wanted to create an image of change; thus while moving out of the comparably comfortable housing estate for the regime leadership at "*Wandlitz*", together with the entire Politburo, he did nothing to seriously address why so many East-Germans were attempting to leave their country. Likewise, while articulating his willingness to enter a phase of democratic reforms, at the same time, he was not prepared to legitimize the *Neues Forum*. According to him, enough "democratic platforms" for societal discussion already existed in the state, therefore there was no need for a further one.

The biggest problem with the new leadership lay in the circumstance that they completely misread the demands of the people. Instead of addressing the problems inside the country, the regime believed that the removal of Erich Honecker as well as an introduction of limited reforms would be enough to bring the people away from the streets. However, this not only misread the mood on the streets, but the frantic actions of the regime, as shown by the replacement of Honecker, in many ways sent a wrong signal. As argued by Pollack, the removal of Honecker was a clear sign of weakness. "The protests did not spread until the system had shown its own vulnerability. New hopes concerning the reformability of the GDR were raised" (Pollack, 2002, pg 319).

Increasingly, the Krenz leadership circle stood with its back to the wall. Additionally, undoubtedly as a result of the apparent SED weakness, the opposition of the "Block-parties" as mentioned above was becoming increasingly tougher in tone. Furthermore, while the palace coup intended to secure the power of the SED, the new leadership seemed to face increasing difficulty to retain this power within the party itself. As suggested by Fulbrook, certain political leaders in the provinces appeared to be in doubt on how best to continue (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 258). Thus, while the Krenz regime appeared to be allowing only a limited liberalization, there are indications that on local level there were more genuine SED impulses in the direction of real, tangible reforms. Thus, also for many SED regional leaders, the new SED leadership in Berlin was not softline enough. This was especially the case for the SED leadership in Leipzig but also in Dresden, where the SED leadership began discussion with the Group 20 (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 258). Although some of the aims behind this willingness to engage in dialogue may be questionable with hindsight, there seems to have been a clear effect on the snowballing process of mass mobilization. With the seemingly lowering of the risk, which this liberalization by the SED regime brought, ever more people found the courage to come out and demonstrate (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 258). This undoubtedly also had an effect on the previously state controlled societal organizations and block parties previously under SED control (including the media). As the central SED leadership was losing its control over its own *nomenklatura*, and these were giving increasing liberties – for whatever combination of cynical or genuine motives – these organizations and parties could use the resulting rift within the ruling elite and pursue their own objectives.

In an uncoordinated attempt to hold onto power, the SED introduced a number of emergency reforms. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, the Krenz government drafted new travel regulations, which allowing East Germans to leave temporarily, was intended to prevent



them from leaving for good. The new draft regulations stated that all GDR citizens with valid passports could exit the country through any border. The wall, would temporarily stay in being. Considering that only around 4 million East Germans had a passport, these regulations looked better than they were. It could take months until one received a passport after applying. That evening, the SED spokesman, Günter Schabowski, held a press conference announcing the new program. As Schabowski had not been present when the plan was drafted, he was uncertain about the exact details of the new regulations. This apparently led to him making two important mistakes. The first one was that he stated that *every citizen* could cross, not mentioning the necessity of a passport. Secondly, when a journalist asked him as of when these new regulations came into effect, he replied *Ab sofort* - "immediately" (Carr, 1991, pg 397). When he was asked whether these new regulations would include East Berlin's border with West Berlin, Schabowski replied "Exits can occur at all GDR/BRD border crossings, including Berlin-West" (Clay Large, 2001, pg 528). Egon Krenz had never intended the regulations to take effect immediately, however, now that it had been announced the regime had to follow through.

As soon as these remarks were released, thousands of East Berliners began gathering at the checkpoints to West Berlin. Initially, lacking clear instructions, the guards kept the border closed. Angry and confident that the government would not intervene by force, the people began chanting "Open the Gate! The wall must Go!" (Clay Large, 2001, pg 528). At a little after 20:00, the gates swung open, first at *Bornholmer Strasse*, then *Sonnenallee*, *Invalidenstrasse* and Check point Charlie. By midnight people began dancing on the Wall.

The subsequent events seemed to receive an own momentum, and the SED now sought desperately not only to retain as much power as possible, but also the very existence of the GDR itself. The regime also increasingly lost any remaining illusions that they could still rely on the Soviet Union for support, even on the sensitive issue of upholding the GDR's sovereignty (Gorbachev had previously always articulated that the question of the GDR sovereignty was not negotiable. As events in the GDR but also in the entire region were receiving an ever-greater impetus, it was becoming increasingly more obvious that he would not impose this issue at all cost).

Additionally, as suggested by Stokes, the fall of the Berlin Wall came at a moment of internal uncertainty and further division within the SED. Immediately before the events of November 9-10<sup>th</sup>, the government of Willy Stoph had resigned as well as the entire politburo (Stokes, 1993). The central committee on November 10<sup>th</sup> stated: "a revolutionary movement has set in motion a process of serious upheaval" (Stokes, 1993, pg 181), and

the SED leadership now attempted to save the situation by introducing an “action programme” aimed at bringing democratization (with new democratic elections) and the erection of a market orientated socialist economy. A new cabinet was formed under the reform minded previous SED leader of Dresden, Hans Modrow, on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Egon Krenz resigned as chairman of the council of state (*Staatsrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*) and the council on national defence. Manfred Gerlach, leader of the “Liberal democratic party” (LDPD), one of the block parties, took over as chairman of the council of state, thus becoming acting head of state. (In some respect this broke the leading role of the party before it was actually removed from the constitution in December). Krenz himself in theory retained control by remaining chairman of the SED. However, as the legitimacy of the old hardline guard was increasingly being questioned by the majority of the party members, and the position of head of state had no real power, Modrow *de facto* took over control in his constitutional role as Prime Minister.

Faced with an imminent economic implosion, a massively growing erosion of party credibility, increasing social unrest and a continued emigration of its citizens (Clay Large, 2001) the new government was faced with a situation where further, genuinely far reaching reforms (both political and economical) had become inevitable. Hans Modrow immediately promised free elections in the near future, and to prevent a clear mutiny, the “block-parties” as well as organizations previously strictly controlled by the SED, received permission to act independently. At this point, the regime formalised a process that had already been taking place. By giving the organisations the freedom to act independently before the regime lost all control, however, they at least managed to appear as acting instead of reacting, which though in reality they were. This step also affected the media's independence and actions.

Parliament, using secret ballots for the first time in its history, expelled Erich Honecker and the former *Staatssicherheitsdienst* (Stasi) Chief Erich Mielke, and state prosecutors began investigating whether to press charges against high ranking SED officials for corruption and miss-management. Honecker himself was under investigation for ordering border guards to kill people attempting to flee. In the hope to prevent further people leaving for good, the government stated that the new travel regulations would not be taken back (trying to counter fears in the population), and invited the opposition forces including “*Neues Forum*” and “Democracy now” to Round Table negotiations regarding the question of how to embark on the transition to a new multi-party system. It is important to highlight again, that although the participants of the Round Table began discussing the possibility of a “third way” – “socialism with a human face” - instead of the current system of the GDR or

re-unification with West Germany, the majority of East Germans on the streets increasingly demanded re-unification as soon as possible.

As the weeks passed, it became clear that if the SED wanted to regain any support it had to break with the past more evidently. The *Volkskammer* on December 1<sup>st</sup>, agreed to remove the leading role of the party in the constitution and promised pluralism. In December 1989, during an extra-ordinary party congress, Egon Krenz was replaced as party Chairman by a relatively young charismatic SED member, Gregor Gysi, who transformed the party into the “Party of Democratic Socialism” (*Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus* or PDS). Modrow, however, retained the dominant position as head of government and chief-negotiator with the opposition groups. For the majority of East Germans, however, the new leadership was nonetheless not able to or sufficiently prepared to distance themselves from the previous leadership.

This for many was evident through the simple fact that although the leadership of the *Stasi* had been replaced and its name changed to the “*Amt für nationale Sicherheit*” in November 1989, its work and structures as such remained intact. The *Stasi*, though, stood directly for the old system and thus remained subject of considerable odium by the population. As suggested by Stokes “The most direct target of public hatred was the *Stasi*” (Stokes, 1993, pg 182), as it was the most telling symbol of the regimes surveillance system, which had managed to corrupt and to terrorize the entire East-German society for decades. As a result, in December 1989, several incidences occurred where demonstrators stormed various *Stasi* offices. The first incident occurred on the night of December 4<sup>th</sup>, when the *Stasi* headquarters in Leipzig were stormed. It is today unclear whether these stormings were actually initiated by *Stasi* employees in order to facilitate the destruction of documents. Nonetheless, as a result of these public demonstrations of discontent against both the old *Stasi* and its successor organisation, the round table in December decided to dissolve it completely. The government placed the *Stasi* headquarters under strict surveillance, promising that no documents would be destroyed or carried away. At the same time, state attorneys began securing and analysing the remaining documents.

By February 1990, the government agreed to enter a coalition government with 8 representatives of the opposition round table groups. Although these opposition members became “ministers without portfolio”, it was nevertheless an important step in the process of dissolving the party state. It was agreed that parliamentary elections were to be held in March 1990 (Thus completing the “liberalization” phase and initiating the Institutionalization

of democracy (democratization) phase). Although initially comprising over twenty political parties, five main parties emerged competing in the elections, which were largely polarized on either the centre-right or on the left. For these the election was to be seen as “a referendum on unification” (Stokes, 1993, pg 184), the centre-right favouring quick unification while the left did not.

The successful completion of the elections marked the end of the “democratization” phase as argued by Bos (2004). The result of the elections was a significant victory for the Christian democrats (CDU), receiving 44 per cent of the votes, while the Social democrats (SPD) received only 22 per cent and the Communists 16 per cent. For the CDU this outcome was a clear mandate for bringing unification, as the CDU had advocated unification, while the SPD and SED-PDS had opposed it (at least instant unification as to the position of the SPD). Initially, not wanting to support the CDU’s drive towards instant unification, after two month of negotiation, the SPD nevertheless agreed to enter a grand coalition favouring unification - representing a total of 75 per cent of votes - under the leadership of CDU Prime Minister Lothar de Maziere. The new government stated its goal was “to achieve the unity of Germany swiftly and responsibly for the whole of the German Democratic Republic....on the basis of Article 23 of the Basic Law” (Quoted in Stokes, 1993, pg 185).

Regime change in the GDR was therefore initiated by “revolution” or what von Beyme refers to as the “implosion of the communist regime” involving mass mobilization (von Beyme, 1996). Conditions for a “negotiated revolution” were simply not present in 1989, and the regime was forced by popular unrest to initiate reforms and to negotiate with the opposition forces. As argued by Batt, in the case of the GDR, the inflexible ruling elite was unprepared for negotiation, and collapsed facing the spontaneous mobilization of the population (Batt, 1991).

### **3. The Media in transition**

Shortly before the beginning of the “Wende”, a GDR economist, Jürgen Kuczynski, stated:

*“Was das geistige Leben betrifft, so ist zu sagen: Vor allen Dingen fehlen der Meinungsstreit und die Kritik. Die öffentliche Diskussion von Widersprüchen ist aber die Voraussetzung darüber, sie zu lösen. Wenn wir uns unsere Presse von vor 40 Jahren ansehen, so war sie damals entschieden lebhafter und lebendiger als heute. Die Briefe, die gegenwärtig bei ganz seltenen Gelegenheiten abgedruckt*

*werden, sind langweilige Zustimmungen ohne eigene Überlegungen zum Problem"*  
(Quoted in Holzweißig, 1990, pg 15).

Holzweißig, however, argues that the situation described by Kuczynski changed in the middle of October 1989, when the GDR-Press began to undergo a state of transformation (Holzweißig, 1990, pg 15). This is also confirmed by the interview with Wolfgang Thierse. While arguing that the GDR newspapers, especially the SED newspapers, until the end of the GDR were an insult for the intelligence and the need of truthfulness of even only slightly critical people, by the autumn of 1989 –albeit far too late – Thierse states that this changed. *"Die Tageszeitungen, vor allem die SED-Zeitungen (z.B. "Neues Deutschland", "Berliner Zeitung") waren eine Beleidigung für die Intelligenz und das Wahrhaftigkeitsbedürfnis von auch nur einigermaßen kritischen Menschen. Das war bis zum Schluss der DDR so. Erst im Herbst 1989, also viel zu spät, begann sich etwas zu ändern."* (Interview Thierse, 14.4.2008). If these arguments holds true – which the research of this dissertation confirms - how then, did this transformation occur?

Following the mass exodus of GDR citizens via Hungary and the FRG embassies in Prague and Warsaw as well as the tumultuous events on the streets in October of 1989, it became obvious that the regime was no longer in control of the events and could no longer exert as much influence on the institutions and organisations up to then strictly under party control. These included the "block-parties", but also the various media. Kutsch (1990) for example points to the fact that the "recommendations" of the Central Committee's "Agitation and Propaganda" department, which had always been sent to the chief editors office, no longer existed even during the final days of Honecker.

This is confirmed by the interview with Michael Müller, deputy- editor of the "Neues Deutschland" in 1989 (Interview, Müller, 2005, pg 4). According to him, these clear "instructions" or "recommendations" by the politburo stopped after October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1989. Every Thursday a meeting took place in the Central Committee in the department "Agitation and Propaganda" which stood under the leadership of Joachim Herrmann. There the journalists were told what had been decided during the politburo meetings on Tuesdays and during the General-secretary meetings on Wednesdays, and were told what to write. On the first two meetings following the October 7<sup>th</sup> demonstrations - therefore on Thursday October 12<sup>th</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup> - as a consequence of the pressure on the regime resulting from the events on the streets, no "clear instructions" were issued anymore as the leadership recognized that a change in regime actions had become necessary. As remembered by Müller: *"Da war deutlich festzustellen, dass es unter dem Druck der*

*Ereignisse keine Anweisungen in diesem Sinne mehr gab, sondern dass man schon gemerkt hat, wir müssen ganz anders regieren, wir müssen aufgeschlossen den Leuten gegenüber sein. Ich kann mich nicht erinnern, dass bei solchen Zusammenkünften Diskussionen aufkamen. Die Beteiligten dort haben sich das angehört und kaum eine Frage gestellt. Kurzum, ich glaube, das ist schon in diesen 14 Tagen danach so erodiert* (Interview, Müller, 1995, pg 4) He continues by arguing that the conclusion that the regime was eroding was obvious to the entire media *nomenklatura* by that time: *“Wir kannten uns ja alle, die Leitungskader damals, durch Telefonate. Also da war schon deutlich zu spüren, dass das System einen Knacks bekommen hat, und dass das offensichtlich auch nicht mehr zu kippen gewesen ist in alter Weise”* (Interview, Müller, 1995, pg 4).

Initially, in the early summer months of 1989, the media faced the problem that on the one hand, officially the demonstrations did not exist. How could they write on something that did not exist? On the other hand, the developments and especially the mass exodus of GDR citizens brought a growing ferment of open discussion, and there was no longer any possibility of repressing public debate. This in many ways forced the media to openly say the obvious. As suggested by Fulbrook: “the binding spell of mutual complicity in mass deceit began to be broken” (Fulbrook, 1995, pg 247). This was also suggested when in the middle of October 1989, before the replacement of Erich Honecker, even the state owned and closely controlled ADN news agency finally began to cover the protest marches (Kutsch, 1990, pg 9).

After the fall of Honecker, the independence of the Media became even more fervent, as remembered by Wolfgang Spickermann, who became Chief-Editor of the “Neues Deutschland” in November 1989. Spickermann argues that after the fall of Honecker, when he suddenly became acting chief-editor, he also suddenly no longer had to ask permission for anything from the party leadership any more (something his predecessor still had to): *“Ich habe als Chefredakteur nie einen gefragt. Schlagartig”* (Interview Spickermann, 1995, pg 3). The SED leadership was in a state of turmoil and therefore simply no longer able to concentrate efforts on these processes. The consequence, as remembered by Spickermann, was a time of vacuity *“Vakuumzeit”* (Interview Spickermann, 1995, pg 3). Müller remembers that in the newspaper the same happened as in the state. When the leadership began to loose control, the people began organising themselves new in the state. This was also the case for newspapers as such, where no more dialogue partners were present: *“...Es trat eigentlich der gleiche Effekt ein wie im Staat. Als das plötzlich oben wegbrach, passierte das gleiche beim ND. So wie die Leute angefangen haben, sich im Staat neu zu organisieren lief es auch beim ND – es fehlten ja*

*Ansprechpartner*” (Interview Müller, 1995, pg 3).

These developments had an enormous influence on the media. The editors and journalists felt that something was about to change even before this came home to the majority of the GDR’s citizens. This created a certain vacuity that enabled journalists to act more freely. Especially the younger rank and file journalists of the socialist media system while mostly being “socialists” (predominately softline members), nevertheless believed in a more humane form of socialism than had been implemented under Erich Honecker and was surely also visible in the person and actions of Egon Krenz. Additionally, the journalists of the block-party’s media, who - as previously identified - had never been fervent communists to begin with, also sensing that the system was changing, began to openly change their alliance with the SED. While they had remained in tune with the SED stance until now, believing that the system was here to stay for a considerable time, once this was no longer the case, these journalists began to act in the way in which they had seemingly always wanted to. While some did not oppose the socialist system per se, others wanted a system similar to the one of the FRG or even unification, but most opposed the current socialist system and the SED leadership.

As a result, the individual journalists began scratching on the limits imposed. As remembered by Rainer Höhling, the journalists began testing how far they could go, what would still be published: *“Es war schon so, dass man anfang auszutesten wie weit konnte man gehen, was wurde noch abgedruckt”*. (Interview Höhling, 26.2.2006). An increase in regime critical reporting could subsequently be noticed in the official block party media. On October 11<sup>th</sup> for example, the newspaper “Neue Zeit” shortened an ADN-release containing a Statement by the SED leadership about the demonstrations during the GDR’s anniversary celebration. With this step the newspaper clearly broke on a previous taboo, as the newspapers –as a form of self-censorship- up to then had never cut or changed any ADN-release. The original text stated: *“Wahr ist, dass Randalierer, aufgeputschte Störer und kriminelle Elemente staatsfeindliche Parolen riefen und die im Ordnungseinsatz befindlichen Volkspolizisten tätlich angriffen. Sie warfen mit Steinen, Flaschen und Brandsätzen, schlugen brutal und rücksichtslos mit Stahlstangen und anderen Schlaggegenständen auf die Ordnungskräfte”* (Neues Deutschland, October 11<sup>th</sup> 1989). The “Neue Zeit” changed this to: *“Die im Ordnungseinsatz befindlichen Volkspolizisten seien tätlich angegriffen, mit Steinen, Flaschen und Brandsätzen beworfen worden”* (Neue Zeit, October 11<sup>th</sup> 1989). In comparison, it is important to note, that the “Neues Deutschland” printed the complete ADN release on October 11<sup>th</sup>, on page 2.

Overwhelmingly, a change began to become visible among all journalists. Even the ADN-employees, overwhelmingly pro-socialist, SED members, could no longer identify with the statements made by the SED leadership. They made clear that they would no longer release statements in which the demonstrators would be referred to as “*Randalierer*” – “rioters” (Kutsch, 1990), and as mentioned even began covering the demonstrations. It is not to be forgotten that this took place while the old guard was still in place, while for the majority of the citizens it was by no way clear that the moment of change had indeed finally come.

It is important to note that not only were the journalists the first to notice that something was changing inside the regime, but they were also the first to notice changes around the soviet bloc. The GDR had an extensive network of correspondents around the socialist states, and these communicated events and processes back to their colleagues. Even the smallest events or reforms – even those not communicated by the Western Press – were subsequently reverberated into the editorial offices of the GDR’s media.

The overall policy of the new SED regime under Krenz followed the position of allowing a limited media liberalization. While on the one hand, the new elite wanted to appear as a modernizing power, in which the mistakes of the past should be addressed and the people responsible for these wrongdoings punished, on the other hand, this process should not go too far. The institutionalized leadership of the SED in the GDR as well as the existence of the GDR as a socialist state should remain unquestioned. Through an increase in transparency and a more open information flow about previously secret politburo and central committee meetings, the lower party rank and file as well as the citizens should be appeased (Kutsch, 1990). With hindsight, these liberalization measures in turn set free further mobilization effects on the entire media system.

Although the Krenz leadership and later the *de facto* leader Modrow promised to allow media independence, the SED was in reality reluctant to give up its control over communication means, wanting to retain party priority (Robinson, 1995). This is also suggested by a speech in which Schabowski, while stating that the time of the SED giving detailed instructions to the media and in effect administrating them was over, at the same time, he continues to place them within the SED party system by stating that instead, these comrade communists must now act independently on the basis of the party decisions: “*An die Stelle des Anweisens, des Administrierens, des detaillierten Vorkauens, wann, wo, in welcher Schrifttype und mit welcher Stimmlage Meldungen zu bringen sind, tritt das eigenschöpferische, selbstverantwortliche Handeln der Genossen Kommunisten auf der*



*Grundlage der Parteibeschlüsse*” (Neues Deutschland, November 11/12<sup>th</sup> 1989, quoted in Holzweißig, 1990, pg 33).

However, under pressure by the “Round Table” talks, and from the increasingly autonomous “block-parties”, democratization of the print Media occurred in reluctant stages between October 1989 and the March 1990 elections. Additionally, questions of party ownership and the heavy financial burden of having to subsidise such a vast amount of newspapers enhanced this process (it is estimated that in 1989, the number of employees dependent on state salaries in the print media exceeded 35 000)(Knabe, 2008, pg 64). Party control over the media had always been ensured through financial control. This financial control, however, proved an enormous burden and by the end of 1989 one that the state could simply no longer take.

Generally, the media system witnessed an overall liberalization and was subject to reform as of October 1989, as hardline decision makers were increasingly replaced with softline members. At institutional level the top “*nomeklatura*” members were replaced. Together with Honecker the Central Committee’s secretary for “Agitation and Propaganda”, Joachim Herrmann, was replaced by the former journalist Günter Schabowski, member of the politburo and SED leader of Berlin. Schabowski had already once replaced Herrmann, namely in 1978 when he took over the position as Chief-editor of the “Neues Deutschland”. During the Central Committee meeting at the beginning of November, Schabowski criticised the strict control of the media by his predecessor. Additionally, he replaced the head of the “*Presseamtes des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates*” with Wolfgang Meyer, and changed the name of the department itself to “*Presse- und Informationsdienstes der Regierung der DDR*”. At the End of November, Meyer publicly declared that Radio, TV and the ADN were no longer bound to the SED (Holzweißig, 1990, pg 18). A report put together by Members and Secretaries of the politburo of the former Central Committee in December 1989, strongly criticised the media policies of Honecker and Herrmann. It labels Herrmann a compliant executer of Honecker’s instructions, stating that the creativity of journalists was prevented and that through the “press-office” of the government – which in reality was the extended arm of the department agitation and propaganda – the block party media were directly controlled (Holzweißig, 1990, pg 34). All Chief-editors of the 17 SED-newspapers left their positions between November 1989 to the middle of January 1990 (Holzweißig, 1990).

In the “Neues Deutschland”, this change occurred as following the replacement of Honecker, the Chief Editor of the newspaper, Herbert Naumann, simply no longer showed

up. Initially, Schabowski wanted to make the former assistant of Naumann, Harald Wessel, Chief-Editor. After heavy debate and open confrontation with the employees of the “Neues Deutschland” he was forced to agree to let them decide themselves who new Chief-Editor should be, who in turn decided on Spickermann. Schabowski and Krenz then reluctantly accepted this. This not only made a reform orientated person head of the paper, but also suggested just how much more self-confident and independent the journalists were acting towards the SED, which still remained the paper owner.

Before Spickermann was officially made the Chief-editor, it seems that the “Neues Deutschland” was split between hardliners and softliners, although the majority of the media employees seem to have supported a softline position. Both, however, fought for their articles to be printed. The interviews suggest that once the position of the regime’s old guard was being increasingly eroded, the position also of the hardline fraction within the SED media were being increasingly eroded. This was then formalised when Spickermann formally became Chief-Editor, who clearly supported the reform elements within the party (indeed, he was apparently even too reform minded for Schabowski). The paper (as will be described later) then enormously supported the internal democratization process of the SED, calling for a more detailed investigation of corruption incidences and the misuse of powers of high-ranking party members. Additionally, the paper (as of the end of November / beginning of December) increasingly came to foster a replacement of Egon Krenz.

In the Organs of the “block-parties”, much was changing as well. The Chief-Editor of the “Neue Zeit” left and the paper no longer appeared as the central organ of the CDU but rather as the daily newspaper of the CDU “*Tageszeitung der Christlich-Demokratischen Union Deutschlands*”, as of February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1990. As the interview with the CDU-parliamentarian Arnold Vaatz suggests (Interview 7.5.2008), inside the CDU party paper of Dresden, “Die Union”, an internal putsch of the editors against the Chief-Editor was taking place in an attempt to bring an internal liberalisation. These editors were very regime critical and had already supported the publication of the “Victor Klemperer” diaries.

The end of the leading role of the SED in the constitution as well as the personnel changes within the party increased the medias possibility to break free from SED influence. The new party leader Gregor Gysi in December advocated more pluralism and brought forward recommendations for the creation of a “Media Control Commission (Kutsch, 1990). Indeed, the creation of this commission consisting of 24 Experts, made up of the “Round Table” participants (Robinson, 1990), was an important step in allowing a greater media

pluralism. This Commission subsequently set the rules for “Media autonomy” and for a balanced election campaign and media access for all parties participating in the elections (Kutsch, 1990). The content analysis of this dissertation, however, suggests that this was not picked up by the respective newspapers. The election as such was barely visible in the “Neues Deutschland” (only indirectly advocating the position of the SED-PDS, but not in form of political ads) and the “Neue Zeit” appeared to follow the CDU’s stance of unification.

The influence of the block parties over their own media – as established previously – came to have a strong effect in the way the media began reporting. Especially the CDU “*Christlich-Demokratische Union*” and the LDPD “*Liberaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*”, represented a middle class thinking, and in 1989 soon came to position themselves for a post-socialist, truly multi-party system. The media of these respective parties were – although at the beginning cautious – nevertheless instructed directly to begin a critical stance vis-à-vis not only the past (as was the case for the SED newspapers) but also on the system as such, and to break on previous taboo topics. Manfred Gerlach, head of the LDPD, argues that he encouraged his Chief-editors to print critical articles and commentaries and to refer to him should the SED regime complain or attempt to intervene (Gerlach, 1991, pg 167-170). Additionally, these party leaders used their media as a platform to make their own views public, often through commentaries or with the publication of open letters.

At the same time, the journalists working for these respective newspapers finally felt liberated to act freely. Many, although being children of the system and not necessarily wanting to do away with a socialist state as such, at the same time believed that reform of the system was necessary. The media of the block parties were thus split into two groups, as were the block parties as such: Hardliners (supporting the SED) and softliners (indeed, this was also the case in the SED papers). As suggested by Vaatz (Interview, Vaatz, 7.5.2008), as the events were unfolding within the GDR, the journalists were left with a dilemma: the events that were occurring were an absolute novelty, and the initial response of the regime was to publicly ignore them and to say nothing was happening. Therefore, as argued before, how could the media report on something that was not happening? The editorial offices of the block parties were left perplexed and did not really know how to respond. They witnessed what was happening, spoke to demonstrators and some journalists supported their demands, however, the politburo told them to ignore the events.

At the same time, a certain vacuity was evolving as the regime was too distracted to

continue its mechanisms of media control. Vaatz argues that out of this perplexity and the increasing vacuity existing, some critical journalists became the mouthpiece of the opposition against the SED, while others remained on track with the SED-stance. Vaatz argues that inside the newspaper “Die Union” in Dresden, this led to supporters as well as opposition voices to be heard, as the editorial office was in disagreement. The newspaper therefore began reporting on something, which according to the regime, did not exist. This was largely the case for most “block-party” media. More and more, however, as the hardline media nomenklatura inside the block party media were being replaced with journalists favouring some form of change, the tone of the newspapers became progressively more critical, increasingly becoming the platform of the opposition groups.

As suggested by the interviews for this dissertation, a two-way relationship between the media and the “block-party” leadership emerged. On the one hand, it was in the interest of the increasingly independent block parties to have their media de-legitimise the SED-regime, and thus they began to instruct their media to report more critically or used the media to make their own messages public. On the other hand, as argued by Vaatz (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008), it was the critical journalists of the Block parties who at times fostered change within the respective block parties, and thus initiated or at least supported an internal party democratization process. As suggested by Vaatz, “Die Union” for example, increasingly became the mouthpiece of the emancipation of the party vis-à-vis the SED, directly supporting those within the party who wanted to break free from the SED dominance as well as demanding change. Additionally, the increasing demands by the “block-party” media as well as the demands by the emerging opposition groups that could use the “block-party” media (especially those of the LDPD and the CDU) as a platform, put further pressure on the regime. As argued by Arnold Vaatz, it gave the opposition a logistical power to organize and mobilize against the regime and for their aims (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008).

#### **4. From state financing to market environment: the consequences of the new economic working reality**

A dominating theme of the period 1989/1990 was a change in the working mode of the East-German newspapers. As the party-system was falling apart, so was the way the newspapers worked economically. The party-state could simply no longer finance this vast media-empire, especially as the legitimacy of their own assets were being questioned. As a result, very soon the first employees either resigned or were laid off. This occurred in

various stages between 1989-1990. The first stage was that several journalists left their jobs starting (often as freelancers) for West-German publishing houses, believing that East-German newspapers soon would no longer have an economic foundation with which they could survive (Interview Bötcher, 19.3.2008). This came as the circulation of the newspapers were beginning to decline, and as the state subsidies were dropping. In 1989, the “Neues Deutschland” had a circulation of approx. 1,1 million copies. By April 1990, when the official subsidies for the paper were completely scraped (the subsidies were gradually declining since 1989), the paper had a remaining circulation of 400,000. (By the autumn of 1990 this fell to 130.000) (Interview Spickermann, 1995, pg 7). In May 1990, the state subsidies stopped as all newspapers (with the exception of a few SED-papers) were placed in a trust, which henceforth managed the newspapers. It was originally the plan that the good going papers should be sold, and that these earnings would then be used to restructure those papers that were less attractive.

Although the majority of papers were sold to West-German publishing houses, not enough money was made in order to save the especially smaller GDR newspapers. As argued by Höhling (Interview, 26.02.2008), there existed a general feeling that everything in the GDR was of bad quality and worthless, as a result of which most newspapers were sold for symbolic prices. Although surely much was outdated and needed to be renewed, with hindsight, not everything was as bad as then argued. The West-German publishing houses bought the GDR press with the idea of keeping the traditional readers and structures. These publishing houses invested a great amount of money, especially in order to strengthen the infrastructure and did not immediately demand that the papers become profitable (Interview Dr. Zimmermann, 18.3.2008).

Nonetheless, a certain degree of fear unfolded among the journalists, seeing the closure of the first newspapers, as well as an initial albeit small layoff of several journalists. Additionally, by the beginning of 1990 it was not yet clear which newspapers could be sold off, and what the intentions of the investors were. Thus, step-by-step a commercial thinking was unfolding across the GDR’s media-landscape, one which increased the reporting on political scandals, in the hope that this would boost sales. As remembered by Elke Bötcher, a commercialization in the GDR’s press landscape unfolded very quickly following the fall of the wall. As soon as the first western newspapers were for sale in East-Germany, the circulation of the GDR newspapers drastically fell (Interview, Bötcher, 18.3.2008). This was only somewhat held at pace by the circumstance that many East-German readers held subscriptions of GDR newspapers, which could not be cancelled immediately. This commercial thinking was, however, further strengthened once the

newspapers were sold off, as most Chief-editors and managers installed by the West-German buyers came from the west and brought in the western economic logic. This was also remembered by Wolfgang Thierse, who argues that with the acquisition of the GDR press by western investors, a commercialization of the press immediately became apparent (Interview, Thierse 14.4.2008). This commercialization began to follow the logic of writing what sells, and this thinking thus influenced the topic selection of the newspapers.

It therefore seems fair to conclude, that the presumption of this dissertation mentioned previously, namely that the changing economic realities influenced the media output of the newspapers, therefore indeed holds true for the GDR.

## **5. Comparing the respective GDR newspapers of research**

The comparison between the “Neues Deutschland” and the “Neue Zeit” suggests that the East-German media remained the mouthpiece of the regime until fairly late during the time of analysis, namely until the replacement of Honecker in October 1989.

This chapter will begin by portraying the results of the quantitative analysis, as described in the chapter “Content analysis design”. It portrays which topics were identified by the key word search as topics being discussed by the respective newspapers during which time of the research period. In a second stage the qualitative findings (*the qualitative analysis representing a greater focus in comparison to the quantitative analysis*) will be presented.

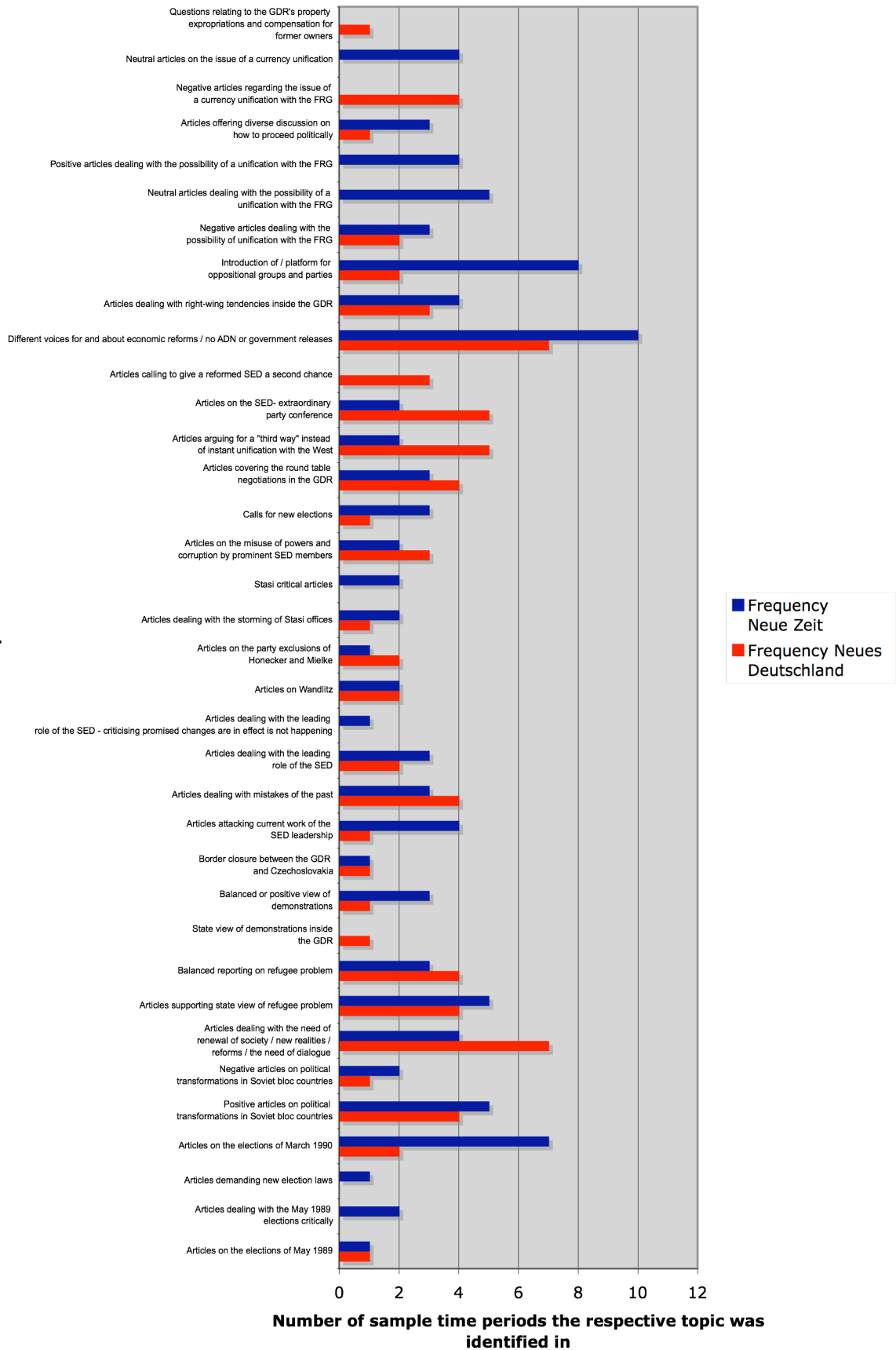
It seems important to highlight again, that as the content analysis did not analyse all printed newspaper issues, it could be that the respective newspapers did indeed cover topics relevant for the content analysis questions, but that these were therefore not identified. The findings presented underneath are the findings of the analysis as conducted according to the weekly random sampling as well as specific analysis during dates of the events as well as for a case varying daily period after the events had taken place, as stated in the chapter “Content analysis design”.

## **5.1. Quantitative analysis**

As already stated, the research time (May 1989 until March 1990) was divided into half-months (15-16 day time frame). For the recording of the quantitative analysis, it was important that the respective paper covered the topic (as selected and identified in the chapter “Content analysis design”) at all within the given 15-16-day time frame (either as an own article / commentary or by a foreign source). Thus, even if only one small article was printed, this was recorded. The recording was made through an “x” for the respective newspaper in the particular timeframe; a red “X” indicating that the respective topic was covered by the “Neues Deutschland”, a blue “X” indicating that it was covered by the “Neue Zeit”. This went for the random weekly sample search (always Wednesdays), as well as for those topics, where daily samples were taken during case varying time periods (as described in the chapter “Content analysis design”). The recordings therefore do not suggest the frequency of the respective topics within each sample 15-16 day time period. N.B. the recordings only show topics that occurred following the predefined words and phrases: thus, certain further dominant topics existed; however, these were not recorded, as they did not match the predefined words set. No importance was given to length or prominence in the quantitative analysis, as this was then done in the qualitative part.

### **5.1.1. Quantitative analysis findings**

The recordings of the pre-selected topics of the quantitative content analysis for the “Neues Deutschland” and the “Neue Zeit” as identified during the keyword sample search can be found in Appendix 1. Below, a comparison between the findings in form of a bar graph can be found. This bar graph directly compares the number of times each specific topic was identified during a half-month sample time frame.





### **5.1.2. Quantitative analysis comparisons**

The election of May 1989 is subject to considerable coverage in both newspapers during the first half of May; the quantitative analysis found no more articles on the topic thereafter, during the sample time of research. As to the topic concerning negative reporting on the May 1989 election (questioning the correctness of the results, or even referring to an election fraud), the content analysis found diverging results as to the two newspapers: in the “Neue Zeit” articles dealing with the elections critically could be identified twice within the given time frame: namely articles during the first and the second half of November 1989. No articles to this topic could be identified in the “Neues Deutschland” within the entire timeframe. As to the topic of calling for new elections, the first example in the “Neue Zeit” was identified as of the first half of November 1989 and the last during the first half of December; in the “Neues Deutschland” the topic was only covered during the first half of December 1989.

As to the question of addressing scandals of the past, the “Neues Deutschland” begins covering these before the “Neue Zeit” does so: during the second half of October in the former, and as of the second half of November in the latter. Both papers, however, cover the issue of the “Wandlitz” housing estate during the second half of November and the first half of December 1989. The issue of the misuse of powers by prominent SED members is covered in the “Neues Deutschland” more often than in the “Neue Zeit”. In the former the topic is covered as of the second half of November and continues to do so until the second half of December 1989. In the “Neue Zeit” examples on this topic could also be found during the second half of November 1989, but then only again during the first half of January 1990.

As to the issue of the party exclusions of Erich Honecker and Erich Mielke, both newspapers of research cover the topic during the first half of December 1989: thereafter no more articles on the topic were found in the “Neue Zeit”, while the “Neues Deutschland” addresses the issue again during the first half of January 1990.

Nonetheless, although the “Neue Zeit” begins addressing scandals and mistakes of the past fairly late in comparison to the “Neues Deutschland”, on the other hand, the paper

begins addressing important issues of the present more strongly. For example, it begins a balanced reporting on the demonstrations inside the GDR before this is the case in the “Neues Deutschland”; as of the first half of October 1989 in the “Neue Zeit”, and as of the second half of October in the “Neues Deutschland”. In the “Neue Zeit” further examples of balanced reporting on the demonstrations could additionally be identified during the second half of October as well as the second half of November 1989; in the Neues Deutschland” in comparison a balanced reporting was limited to the sample time period of the second half of October.

Furthermore, the “Neue Zeit” begins to attack the current work of the SED as of the second half of October, as well as during the second half of November, the first half of December 1989 as well as during the first half of January 1990. Therefore, the issue receives attention well before this is addressed in the “Neues Deutschland”. In the “Neues Deutschland” this is only addressed in one sample time period, namely during the first half of December. This suggests, that while the “Neues Deutschland” was concentrating on mistakes of the past, the “Neue Zeit” was addressing issues for a de-legitimation of the current SED leadership: thus confirming the findings of the background research and interviews. Both newspapers, however, begin to discuss the issue of the leading role of the SED as of the first half of November 1989.

All in all the “Neue Zeit” seems to address critical issues before this is done so in the “Neues Deutschland”. However, the quantitative content analysis also suggests that the paper remained on the SED-stance until the first half of October 1989. The paper only began to oppose the status quo, to begin a more balanced reporting, once the regime was increasingly standing with its back to the wall. This then increased in tone once the regime’s grip on power eroded even further. For example, when the GDR closed its borders with Czechoslovakia on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1989 in order to prevent further citizens from fleeing the country, both papers covered the issue remaining on party line.

This is suggested further in relation to offering a positive picture of political transformation in the Soviet bloc (where it is already a topic as of the second half of May in the “Neues Deutschland”, while it is only addressed in the “Neue Zeit” as of the first half of July), as well as the issue of addressing the need of a renewal of society / new realities / reforms / the need of dialogue (where it is already addressed as of the first half of August 1989, while in the “Neue Zeit” the topic is only identified as of the second half of October 1989.) This therefore confirms the findings of the interviews as well as those of the qualitative analysis (see below), namely that the “Neue Zeit” remained the mouthpiece of the regime

until October 1989, but then quickly changed, beginning to address critical and relevant issues for the transformation process. In this, the “Neue Zeit” becomes a platform for the introduction of opposition groups, parties and people as of the second half of October and remains so steadily until the first half of March 1990 (during eight sample time periods in the “Neue Zeit”). The “Neues Deutschland” on the other hand, seldom becomes a platform for oppositional groups; during only two sample time periods, namely during the second half of December 1989 as well as during the second half of February 1990.

Additionally it seems, that this platform examples in the “Neues Deutschland” only come in combination with negative voices concerning the question of unification with the FRG. As to direct negative articles dealing with a possible political unification with the West, the first article could be identified in the “Neue Deutschland” during the second half of December 1989; while the first article on the same topic was only found during the first half of January 1990. Although the “Neue Zeit” does have more sample time periods that write negatively about a possible political unification with the West (during three sample time periods in the “Neue Zeit” compared to two sample time periods in the “Neues Deutschland”), the overall picture seems to be more balanced in comparison to the “Neues Deutschland”. For example, this content analysis found no neutral or positive articles as to a possible unification in the “Neues Deutschland”, while in the “Neue Zeit” these topics were covered often: from the first half of January 1990 until the first half of March 1990 continuously on neutral articles on unification, as well as from the second half of January until the first half of March 1990 continuously on positive articles on the topic. The same goes for articles relating to the possibility of a currency unification. While the “Neues Deutschland” has negative articles on this issue continuously from the second half of January until the first half of March 1990, the “Neue Zeit” has no negative articles on this topic at all. Rather, the latter has neutral articles on the topic during the identical sample time periods, whereas the “Neues Deutschland” has no neutral articles.

Indeed, while the “Neue Zeit” comes to articulate issues relevant for the imminent transformation process, the “Neues Deutschland” appears to cover issues relevant for the securing of power of the SED. When articles appear criticising the current work of the party leadership, these usually come with articles asking to give the reformed SED a second chance in the same issue, or to argue in favour of a “third way” rather than unification with the west. While the “Neues Deutschland” argues to give a reformed SED a second chance during the second half of November 1989, the first half of December 1989 as well as during the first half of March 1990, no such example could be identified in the “Neue Zeit”. As to the issue of a “third way”, although the “Neue Zeit” does argue for the cause

during the first half of December 1989 as well as during the first half of January 1990, examples in the “Neues Deutschland” could be identified more often; namely, from the second half of November until the second half of December 1989, as well as from the second half of January until the first half of February 1990. This again supports the picture of a more balanced reporting on part of the “Neue Zeit”.

Similar goes for the issue of economic reform. While the “Neue Zeit” begins to publish different voices for and about economic reform (no ADN or government releases) already as of the second half of October 1989, this is done so in the “Neues Deutschland” only as of the second half of November. And again these articles in the latter seem to come in combination with articles opposing a currency unification with the FRG, or arguing for a “third way”.

As to the issue of addressing the leading role of the SED, this is addressed by both during the first half of November 1989, lasting continuously until the first half of December 1989 in the “Neue Zeit”; and until the second half of November in the “Neues Deutschland”. Additionally, the former criticises during the first half of January 1990 that steps to limit this leading role - as agreed to during the round table negotiations - were not being sufficiently implemented.

As to setting an agenda for issues important to society, the “Neue Zeit” also appears to have a stronger role according to this content analysis findings. An example here is the problem of right-wing tendencies inside the GDR, something that the “Neue Zeit” already addresses during the first half of November 1989, while the “Neues Deutschland” only comes to address the issue as of the first half of December. Overall, the former addresses the issue during four sample time periods, while the latter does so only in three.

The only exception to this appears to be the issue of addressing the issue of property expropriations in the GDR and compensation for current and former owners. Here, this analysis found that the “Neues Deutschland” began to address the issue during the first half of March 1990, while no article on the topic could be identified in the “Neue Zeit”.

## 5.2. Qualitative analysis

The interviews as well as the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis suggest that a clear change occurred in the GDR's media landscape after the demonstrations of October 1989, and especially following the resignation of Erich Honecker in the same month. It therefore makes sense to divide the analysis in what was covered before and after the resignation of Honecker in October 1989.

The only content analysis focus question before the replacement of Honecker is the question of the elections of May 1989. In both newspapers this was covered completely favourable to the regime. There is not even a suggestion that anyone doubted the high result or claimed any election-fraud. This although a number of activists – including pastor Rainer Eppelmann in Berlin – handed in a criminal complaint regarding election fraud, knowing that the public attorney would most likely take no action. It was, however, publicly known, and the fact that the newspapers did not mention the charges suggests that they were still strictly under SED control.

Additionally, the further topics identified for the keyword search will also be divided into the time before and after the resignation of Honecker.

### 5.2.1. The “Neues Deutschland” before the resignation of Erich Honecker

Not only does the “Neues Deutschland” not mention the opposition to the election results, but it also praises the circumstance that for the first time in the GDR's history, additionally to the nominees of the “Block parties”, societal organisations and unions could nominate their members. In the issue of May 6/7 of 1989 on page 1 the “Neues Deutschland” wrote:

- *“Wahlaufruf des Nationalrats fand tatkräftige Zustimmung”.....“Langjährigen Traditionen entsprechend wurden auf der Grundlage des Wahlgesetzes nahezu ein Drittel mehr Kandidaten in die Wahlvorschläge aufgenommen, als Abgeordnetenmandate zur Verfügung stehen. Wie bisher haben die im Demokratischen Block vertretenen Parteien und Massenorganisationen Kandidaten nominiert. Zugleich konnten erstmalig auch andere Organisationen und Vereinigungen aktive Mitglieder aus ihren Reihen den Mandatsträgern vorschlagen.”.....“Am Vorabend der Wahl*

wurden in verschiedenen Städten und Gemeinden weitere Objekte übergeben“.....*“Rund eine Million Wahlhelfer der Nationalen Front trugen bis zum Wahltag mit dafür Sorge, dass die wahlberechtigten Bürger am 7. Mai ihre demokratischen Grundrechte verwirklichen und in freier Entscheidung sowie Wahrnehmung ihrer staatsbürgerlichen Verantwortung bestimmen können, wer als Abgeordneter in ihrem Auftrag an der Ausübung der Staatsmacht durch die Volksvertretungen teilnehmen soll.“*

The newspaper quotes an ADN release concerning the election results as a *“Eindruckvolles Bekenntnis zu unserer Politik des Friedens und des Sozialismus”* (Neues Deutschland, 8. May 1989, pg 1). This positive reporting on the elections can be witnessed through the entire period of the first half of May. By quoting the other members of the “block-parties”, who apparently view positively the outcome of the elections, the newspaper clearly fosters the picture that the system is working perfectly. Additionally, during the period of the May 1989 elections, the “Neues Deutschland” looks back at the achievements of the last 40 years with praise. It comes to the conclusion that much has been achieved, despite the fact that the Class-enemy – the *“Klassenfeind”* - has consistently laid stones on the road of the socialist project.

In August of 1989, with the sudden dramatic increase of GDR-refugees in the FRG’s embassies in Prague and Budapest, the newspapers stuck to the official line, and portrayed the events as a situation created by the FRG in order to discredit the GDR. In this the paper writes of organised “human trafficking” and quotes foreign countries condemning the FRG for destabilizing the European interests and acting against international law. An example is an article on September 13<sup>th</sup> with the title: *“Erklärung von CTK”*, in which the Czechoslovak news agency CTK condemns the actions of the FRG but also those of the Hungarian reformist government, for allowing the Visa free crossing of GDR citizens into Austria despite contracts between both states not to do so.

On October 4<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the paper quotes the “Prawda”, which argues that it was no coincidence that the FRG was initiating this situation shortly before the fortieth anniversary of the GDR. It concludes that, no matter how much the FRG wants to destabilize the GDR, it will not succeed in depreciating the great historical successes of the GDR. In the same issue the paper quotes the Czechoslovak government stating that the FRG was acting completely irresponsible: *“Sprecher der CSSR-Regierung: Verantwortungslose Haltung*

*der BRD*” (Neues Deutschland, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2). Other examples include the article also on September 13<sup>th</sup> (pg 5): *“Die Obhutspflicht der BRD und ihr Drang nach den Grenzen von 1937”*, arguing that the so called “Obhutspflicht”, with which the FRG legitimized the possibility for all GDR citizens to automatically become citizens of the FRG, was nothing more than a revanchist idée. By assuming this position, the FRG does nothing more than argue that the German “Reich” which was born in Versailles in 1871, continued until today, namely in the borders of 1937, ignoring the fact that Nazi Germany destroyed itself in 1945 as a consequence of its aggressive policies. Another article on the same day *“Wie die BRD das Völkerrecht verletzt”* (pg 5) argues that the FRG’s “Obhutspflicht” policy clearly violates the UN-Charta, and by giving travel documents in its embassies to citizens of the GDR it also violates the agreements regarding consulate rights signed during the Vienna convention of April 1963. By referring to the citizens law of 1913 of the German “Reich” in extending its citizenship to the people of the GDR, this article too argues that the FRG was following a revanchist policy.

On September 21<sup>st</sup> 1989 on page 2, the paper prints an article claiming that a “Mitropa” cook had been dazed by a manipulated cigarette and kidnapped into the FRG. This article follows the stance of the paper as well as the regime, namely that the FRG is following a position of organised human trafficking, even kidnapping East-German citizens in an attempt to destabilise and discredit the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR. With this article the paper, however, went too far. Nobody, not even the most stringent SED-Hardliners, believed the story, which greatly de-legitimised the paper. Therefore, on November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1989, on page 2, the paper printed an article stating that it would investigate the story of the cook in detail and would clarify what really happened. It does this on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1990, on page 2, concluding that the kidnapping had not taken place, and that the cook had been forced to tell the story to the newspaper by Stasi-agents.

Regarding the demonstrations in October 1989, during and following the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the republic, the paper remains completely on the line of the regime. As already mentioned previously, on October 11<sup>th</sup>, the paper prints an ADN release which de-legitimises the demonstrators and completely backs the security forces. It also attacks the western press, which the paper argues instigated the aggressive protests by the people:

- *“....Es ist nachgewiesen, daß westliche Korrespondenten die Volkspolizei nicht nur verleumden, sondern daß sie zu den Organisatoren und Aufwieglern gehörten. So viele “Zufälle”, immer gerade dann vor Ort zu sein, wenn sich Randalierer zusammenrotten, kann es gar nicht geben.....Was westliche*

*Medien auch immer gegen die Deutsche Volkspolizei an Verleumdungen übelster Art vorbringen, wird diese nicht daran hindern, den Dienst zum Schutz der Bürger, für den Sozialistischen Staat jederzeit standhaft zu erfüllen*” (Neues Deutschland, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2).

### **5.2.2. The “Neue Zeit” before the resignation of Erich Honecker**

The “Neue Zeit” does also not mention any opposition to the election results of May, and instead also follows the SED stance of approving the “Impressive vote for the candidates of the national front” (*“Eindruckvolles Votum für die Kandidaten der National Front”*) (Neue Zeit, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2). It concludes by praising the “superiority of the ideas of socialism” (Neue Zeit, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 3).

Nonetheless, a divergence to the “Neues Deutschland” in the way the “Neue Zeit” began to cover the issue of GDR refugees can be identified early on. On the one side, the paper follows the official GDR stance, arguing that the FRG is following a completely irresponsible strategy in the handling of human destinies. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, for example, the newspaper writes on page 2:

- *“Unter Anwendung aller Methoden der Versprechungen, des psychologischen Drucks und unverhüllter Abwerbung werden Bürger der DDR dazu gebracht, über dritte Länder ihre Heimat zu verlassen. Verbunden ist der Menschenhandel mit einer zügellosen Verleumdungskampagne gegen die DDR. All dies geschieht unter Mißachtung der Staatsbürgerschaft der DDR, unter der Anmaßung einer sogenannten “Obhutspflicht für alle Deutschen”. Die Aktionen der BRD sind generalstabsmäßig vorbereitet, sie werden skrupellos durchgeführt: so wie es dem Charakter der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft entspricht.”*

On September 13<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 2, under the headline *“Medienrummel und die Realitäten”* the paper raises the question what would happen to the refugees in the FRG once the media interest had left? The paper quotes various FRG sources posing just this question. ZDF reporter Hirsch says: *“Nach der abenteuerlichen Reise wird manchem erst bewusst, auf was er sich da eingelassen hat.”* The Süddeutsche Zeitung: *“Aber wer*



*kümmert sich in einigen Wochen um sie, wenn die ganze Aufregung wieder vergessen und der Alltag eingekehrt ist?”.*

It concludes by stating that refugees would not receive concrete promises concerning housing and work. Additionally, they cannot choose freely where to live inside the FRG, and they face missing kindergarten spaces. Additionally, the question is raised how much the FRG paid to whom so that Hungary (illegally) allowed the GDR citizens to cross its border with Austria.

On the other hand, however, by October, the newspaper also begins addressing the question of why so many people are leaving; this is a stark difference to the way the “Neues Deutschland” handles the situation, in the end of September still arguing that one would not waste one tear on the leaving refugees. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, although quoting the CSSR- government about the irresponsible attitude of the FRG concerning the refugee situation on page 1, in the same issue on page 3, it prints an article by Wolfgang Hesse with the title: *“In Sorge um das Haus, in dem wir wohnen”*. In it, Hesse compares the GDR to a house, arguing that It was very hard to build up this house and that much of the outside needs repairing. But also from the inside much went wrong. That is why many inhabitants of the house are leaving. But we (the GDR) need all inhabitants. He argues that journalists have a special role in this. They need to make an inventory in order to address issues that went wrong. He concludes that a democratic discussion-process has begun.

On October 12, on page 1, the paper prints a cautious comment by the CDU head Gerald Götting, who calls for a more balanced and honest reporting of the media. He argues that the more realistic the media portray life, the more credible they become, and the more they can thus influence the thinking and action of the readers and listeners.

### **5.2.3. The replacement of Erich Honecker**

Subsequent to the replacement of Honecker, the initial response of both the “Neues Deutschland” and the “Neue Zeit” was to legitimize Krenz's succession of power, attempting to portray him as a figure of reform and dialogue. In both newspapers of research there is no discussion articulating the opposition's unhappiness about this replacement. This despite the fact that various opposition groups publicly circulated statements opposing Krenz's succession (i.e. the statement by “Demokratie Jetzt”, see Bibliography-Documents).

Nonetheless, both the content analysis and the interviews suggest that within several days this began to change, after which the work of the press began to differ, the press of the “block-parties” becoming more critical in comparison to the SED-newspapers. The qualitative comparison too suggests that the respective media of research reacted to the events and the subsequent developments within the party in two different ways. On the one hand, the “Neues Deutschland” concentrated on discussing mistakes from the past as well as “scandals” involving corruption and mismanagement of previously high ranking party officials, including Honecker and his wife. The “Neue Zeit” on the other hand, although also addressing mistakes from the past, more strongly began addressing issues of how the political, social and economic transition should best be tackled, which problems will arise as a consequence of the democratization process as well as from the looming unification question. Even more importantly, it began to act as a platform for the newly emerging opposition. With this the newspaper not only increased the public awareness on the people and programmes of the opposition groups such as “*Neues Forum*” or „*Demokratie jetzt*“, but the newspaper also supported a necessary discussion on issues relating to the problems, possibilities and chances of transition.

#### **5.2.4. The “Neues Deutschland” after the resignation Erich Honecker**

As to the focus questions, the expulsion of Erich Honecker and Erich Mielke in December 1989, all belonged to scandals of the past, and the paper attempted to portray a “party-cleanup”. On December 7th 1989, on page 7, for example the paper comes to the conclusion that Erich Mielke was the man responsible for the aggressive approach against the demonstrators in Berlin during the anniversary of the GDR. By expelling him from the party, the paper advances the view, that now these wrongdoings are finally cleaned up with and that one now needs to look forward. Overall, rather than covering this in depth, the paper in December begins to cover the extra-ordinary party congress, fostering an image of inner-party change, and discussing how the party as such should proceed. (As will still be elaborated on below).

As to the storming of the *Stasi* offices, the paper simply appears to inform its readers about these. In connection to these, however, there existed a growing fear that demonstrations would become more aggressive. Here the “Neues Deutschland” began calling on the people to remain calm and sober-minded, also becoming a platform for a wide range of societal forces appealing to the people with the same intent.

Additionally, to these “scandals” of the past which were mentioned, belonged the comparably luxurious residences of the politburo members in the “Wandlitz” housing estates as well their private hunting areas across the GDR. On November 24<sup>th</sup>, the “Neues Deutschland” brought an article addressing the luxurious estates at “Wandlitz” with the headline:

- „Wie Komfortabel lebte das Politbüro in Wandlitz?“ (Neues Deutschland, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1989 pg 2).

Further examples of the newspaper revealing “scandals of the past” include:

- *“Mitteilung über die Sitzung des Politbüros....Die Sitzung beschäftigte sich unter anderem mit Privilegien, die von ehemaligen Mitgliedern des Politbüros in Anspruch genommen wurden. Entsprechende Beschlüsse wurden gefasst, damit solche Ereignisse sich nicht wiederholen könnten. Alle bekannt gewordenen Fälle von Gesetzesverstöße sollen von der Justiz aufgeklärt werden.* (Neues Deutschland, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 1).

This form of reporting suggests that the newspaper followed the stance of Krenz, it being while allowing a certain freedom of discussion, this should not go too far, and should be limited to addressing mistakes of the past, not what challenges lay ahead and how best to tackle them. These issues should remain in the hands of the politburo. Additionally, the new politburo was to be shown as handling the situation and finally bringing a truly democratic socialism. Especially the article of November 29<sup>th</sup> suggests that the paper followed this, in effect portraying the new leadership as doing everything to reveal the mistakes of the past.

The politburo allowed more transparency, which was to be portrayed by the “Neues Deutschland”, however, at the same time, how best to continue was still the decision to be made by the regimes elite. The attempt, which is apparently made, is to portray a break with the past through Krenz. This form of reporting on mistakes of the past, while uncritically covering the Krenz regime, remained until November 1989, after which a change can be identified. This change follows the closed resignation of the “*Ministerrat der DDR*” on November 7<sup>th</sup>, as well as the decision to call an early, extraordinary party conference in the middle of December 1989. Although still suggesting giving Krenz the benefit of the doubt in uncovering previous scandals and in bringing justice, the newspaper also suggests that currently not enough has been done. An example of this is the following article, where the newspaper clearly suggests that the current politburo was not entirely

open in giving information to the press, and that action now was only taken as a result of press articles demanding further investigation:

- „Wandlitzer „Sortiment“ jetzt in Bohnsdorf: Verladene Ware – verladene Journalisten“.....„Hochwertige Importwaren aus den Beständen der ehemaligen Sonderverkaufsstelle der „Waldsiedlung“ Wandlitz wurden mit sechs W 50 Lastzügen in das Zweiglager Bohnsdorf der Forum-Handelsgesellschaft gebracht. Unser Foto zeigt ein Teil der Rundfunk- und Videotechnik, die in Wandlitz ständig zum „Sortiment“ gehörte. Den vergangene Woche in die „Waldsiedlung“ eingeladenen Journalisten waren aber wichtige Tatsachen vorenthalten worden. Auf Anfrage zu entsprechenden Presseberichten teilte das Konsultations- und Informationszentrum der ZK der SED mit: Das Politbüro hatte am 7. November 1989 alle seit 1960 gefassten Beschlüsse über die Wohnsiedlung Wandlitz aufgehoben. Damit wurde auch die ungerechtfertigte Versorgung der Bewohner der Siedlung Wandlitz eingestellt. Die bis dahin angebotenen Import-Waren, die über das normale Niveau hinausgingen, wurden entsprechenden Einrichtungen des außenhandels zurückgeführt.“ (Neues Deutschland, November 29th, 1989, pg 1)
- „Staatsanwälte sichern Alle Beweise.....Wegen den Presseberichten wurden die Staatsanwälte auf die Manipulation von waren aus der Waldsiedlung aufmerksam. Eine Untersuchung werde eingeleitet, die Öffentlichkeit informiert“.(Neues Deutschland, November 29th, 1989, pg 1)

On December 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> the ND brings an article with the title *“In Sachen Jagd”* demanding a quick investigation concerning allegations of corruption and misuse of privileges of former high-ranking SED members concerning their hunting estates. (Neues Deutschland, December 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>, pg 2)

A *Standpunkt* article of the Neues Deutschland by one of its editors, Reimer Oschmann, brings the above mentioned position –namely suggesting that not enough has been undertaken by the new regime- forward. It clearly states that „Much is foul in the state GDR“, and that if the party wants to survive, then the mistakes, and especially corruption of the past need to be followed up vigorously, regardless of the current or former position of the respective SED functionaries. What appears surprising, is that the paper clearly

begins to demand real, tangible democratic control mechanisms, not simply party control, demanding *“Öffentliches Amt, braucht öffentliche Kontrolle”*:

- *Das etwas faul ist im Staate DDR, darauf werden wir mit Macht gestoßen: Amtsmissbrauch, Korruption und Verschleuderung von Volksvermögen durch Lügner, Schmarotzer und Bankrotteure.“ Greift die Männer der alten Garde an.....“ND ist vor allem dafür, die Ursachen zu enthüllen, die die DDR in diese tiefe politisch-gesellschaftliche Krise gestoßen haben. Das muss rasch, einschneidend und ohne Ansehen der Person geschehen, wenn das Ansehen der Partei nicht weiter beschädigt, die Einheit der Partei und der außerordentliche Parteitag nicht gefährdet werden sollen.....“.....“Bloßgelegt werden müssen: die Wurzeln langfristigen Amtsmissbrauchs, die Pervertierung von Privilegien (die kein Parteitag je beschlossen hat) und das Fehlen funktionierender, demokratischer Kontrollmechanismen, die den großen und kleinen Mittags hätten in den Arm fallen können. Bloßzulegen sind die stalinistischen Denk- und Verhaltensweisen einzelner, die sich selbstherrlich von Volk entfernen, um sich in goldenen Käfigen und Elfenbeintürmen ein Volk nach ihrem Bilde zu „formen“.“.....“Öffentliches Amt braucht öffentliche Kontrolle“.....“Die Wurzelbehandlung muss offen und gründlich erfolgen, und die Zentrale Parteikontrollkommission muss dazu bohrende Fragen stellen und keine Streicheleinheiten verteilen. Nur so wird sich der gesunde Körper der Partei an Haupt und Gliedern erneuern können, werden die vielen hunderttausend Arbeiter, Wissenschaftler und Lehrer, Künstler, Bauern und Studenten, vor weiterer Schwächung und Vergiftung bewahrt bleiben können. Die Zeit drängt“.*(Neues Deutschland, November 29th, 1989, pg 1)

Nonetheless, the paper still concentrates more efforts in revealing mistakes from the past, than in addressing current economic, political and social issues which would seem more pressing in an atmosphere where the GDR was breaking apart.

As the extraordinary party congress was being prepared, and as it was becoming increasingly more evident that for the population Krenz and the entire old guard are not an

option, the underlining position of the paper begins to change, now suggesting that although Krenz might not be the best alternative, that does not mean that the SED as such was not the best alternative to rule the country. On December 4<sup>th</sup> on page 3, this position is outlined directly in the paper, by writing that although the old leadership was not able to renew the party successfully, the party desperately needs to be reformed. Without a reformed SED, more socialism and more democracy are unthinkable in the GDR. The paper sees a “Revolution” being underway inside the GDR, one against a small fraction of corrupt SED members, with the aim of creating a truly democratic socialist society, headed by a renewed SED. Generally, the paper begins to convey the message to give the party another chance. Former high ranking SED members who previously lost their positions but still believe in the SED receive a platform inside the paper. An example of this is Johannes Döhler, former Central Committee member of the SED, who lost his position because he opposed the agricultural policy of the regime. He writes that he is not happy that he was proved right, but will help the honest comrades of the SED as well as the other parties and even the “*Neues Forum*”, who all want a good socialist German Democratic republic:

- „Keine Freude darüber, dass ich damals recht hatte.....Ich verspüre keine Freude darüber, dass ich damals recht hatte. Aber mithelfen werde ich, an der Seite der ehrlichen Genossen der SED, der Mitglieder der anderen Parteien, der Christen, des neuen Forums und all der anderen, die eine gute sozialistische Deutsche Demokratische Republik wollen.“ (Neues Deutschland, November 29th, 1989, pg 3)

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This change in attitude towards the old guard and especially the politburo under Krenz owed a lot to the changing atmosphere within the party members, to the increasing autonomy of SED organizations vis-à-vis the politburo, as well as the growing public discontent against the leadership. This becomes strongly evident on December 4<sup>th</sup>, when the paper replaced its header from being the organ of the central committee to being the organ of the SED-party: “*Neues Deutschland - Organ des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*” to “*Neues Deutschland - Zentralorgan der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*”. This Step, which followed the resignation of the politburo, clearly indicated that the paper was in favour of a reform within the party. Furthermore, it supports the conclusion of the background research and the interviews namely that the hardliners in the paper were increasingly being sidelined as Spickermann was consolidating his position and increasingly acting independently from the party leadership.

The first direct negative article, which this analysis found against Krenz, also came on December 4<sup>th</sup>, with a commentary by one of the papers editors, Gerd Prokot. In it Prokot argues that the doubts of the people that the Central Committee – who clearly lacked the support of the grass roots - were both willing and able to renew both party and state, were growing daily. According to him, the leadership clearly did not have the ability to bring forward credible initiatives and failed in bringing to justice former high ranking officials who clearly committed acts of mismanagement and misuse of privileges. As a consequence, he openly demands that the central committee and the entire politburo resign:

- : *“Arbeit, Arbeit und noch einmal arbeit“, das waren Egon Krenz’ erste Worte, als er vor rund 40 Tagen nach seiner Wahl zum Generalsekretär des ZK der SED vor die Mikrophone trat. Das war eine gute Absicht, aber noch kein Programm. Die Basis der Partei war, obgleich bitter enttäuscht und tief frustriert, zum großen Teil bereit der erneuerten Führung Vertrauensvorschuss einzuräumen, um aus der Absicht ein Programm zu machen..... Diese Hoffnungen haben sich nicht erfüllt. Die Zweifel, dass das alte ZK und das neugebildete Politbüro, die nicht mehr das Vertrauen der Basis besaßen, zur Erneuerung willens und fähig seien, nahmen von Tag zu Tag zu. Wo die Genossen in den Betrieben und Institutionen entschlossenes Handeln, rückhaltlose Aufklärung der Ursachen der Krise und Bestrafung der Schuldigen forderten, lavierte die Führung. Statt der Revolution Impulse und Orientierung zu geben, hechelte sie hinter der Entwicklung her, vollzog meist nur noch nach, was das Volk schon entschieden hatte. Halbherzig und inkonsequent wurde die schmerzhafteste, gleichwohl unerlässliche Selbstreinigung der Partei, die Entlarvung und Bestrafung jener Mitglieder angegangen, die ihr und dem Staat unermesslichen Schaden zugefügt haben. Von der Parteiführung ging keine wirkliche Initiative aus, um die beschämenden Vorgänge ohne Ansehen der Person aufzudecken.....Um die Partei in dieser Situation zu retten und ihr die Möglichkeit zum Neubeginn zu geben, blieb nur noch eine Möglichkeit: das Zentralkomitee und das Politbüro zum Rücktritt zu zwingen. Die Verantwortung des ehemaligen Zentralkomitees besteht jetzt darin, Rechenschaft über die Ursachen der Krise der SED und der Gesellschaft abzulegen. Spät aber hoffentlich nicht zu spät, ist das Feld für einen Arbeitsausschuss geräumt worden, in*

*dessen Händen nunmehr die Vorbereitungen des Parteitages Mitte Dezember liegen, dem schicksalhafte Bedeutung zukommt.*  
.....“(Neues Deutschland, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2)

The content analysis suggests that this increasingly independent stance of the paper vis-à-vis the party leadership - as identified previously in the chapter “The Media in transition” - intensifies continuously until the elections in 1990. On January 10<sup>th</sup> for example, the paper prints an article *“In eigener Sache”*, demanding that the previous chief of agitation and propaganda under Honecker, Joachim Herrmann, be excluded from the party as he played a fatal role in the GDR’s media past. This is also reflected in the renewed change of name. As of January, the paper changed its name from *“Neues Deutschland – Zentralorgan der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands”* to *“Neues Deutschland – Sozialistische Tageszeitung”*. This partly arose out of the circumstance that in December 1989, the new party leader Gregor Gysi changed the name of the party from SED to “Socialist Unity Party /Party of Democratic Socialism” (SED/PDS), but also out of the circumstance that the newspaper replaced its open association with a political party – which nonetheless it *de-jure* remained – increasing its autonomy in relation to this party. Overall, the paper becomes a strong force supporting softline, reform orientated party members, in bringing about a internal party democratization.

Around the second half of November 1989, the “Neues Deutschland” increasingly begins warning of the negative impact of a possible unification with the FRG, arguing for a “third way” as a viable alternative to the current system or instead of unification with the FRG. This “third way” should lead to a “socialism with a human face” and the creation of a truly democratic socialist state. In this, the paper also becomes a platform for opposition activists arguing for the continuation of a sovereign GDR (But only if they follow the stance of arguing for a “third way” and against economic unification). On November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1989, the paper prints a call by leading GDR intellectuals with the title: *“Für unser Land”*. An extract from the call, signed by Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym and Frank Beyer among others, reads:

- *„Unser Land steckt in einer tiefen Krise. Wie wir bisher gelebt haben, können und wollen wir nicht mehr leben. Die Führung einer Partei hatte sich die Herrschaft über das Volk und seine Vertretungen angemaßt, von Stalinismus geprägte Strukturen hatten alle Lebensbereiche durchdrungen. Gewaltfrei, durch Massendemonstrationen hat das Volk den Prozess der revolutionären Erneuerung erzwungen, der sich in*



*atemberaubender Geschwindigkeit vollzieht. Uns bleibt nur wenig Zeit, auf die verschiedenen Möglichkeiten Einfluss zu nehmen, die sich als Auswege aus der Krise anbieten. Entweder, Oder..... Entweder wir bleiben mit der DDR eigenständig, oder wir werden durch „ökonomische Zwänge“ veranlasst unserer materiellen und moralischen Werte zu verkaufen.“ (Neues Deutschland, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2)*

The issue also contains an article by the ND correspondent Dr. Irmtraud Gutschke, who stresses that the left alternative for Europe must not perish. In her article she quotes Stefan Heym:

- *„Wenn wir jetzt versuchen, wirklich Sozialismus aufzubauen, eine neue, bessere Gesellschaft zu gestalten....zeige dies die Stärke des großen Traums, für den so viele Menschen angetreten sind.“ (Neues Deutschland, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 1)*

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, in the “*Nachrichten und Kommentare*” section, the paper brings a commentary by Urs Brockhaus, where he too argues for the survival of an independent GDR, on the basis of a continued democratic renewal:

- *„Frei, aufrecht, verbunden“.....„Selbst jenen wenigen, die es bisher nicht sahen oder sehen wollten, dürfte das Wochenende drastisch vor Augen geführt haben: Für dieses Land, gegründet als Deutsche Demokratische Republik und als solche von Millionen gewollt, geht es um seine Zukunft als Staat mit eigener Identität. Das Wort Sorge ist wohl zu klein, um auszudrücken, was Menschen, die hier leben, arbeiten und das auch weiter tun wollen, in dieser Situation erfüllt. Und doch: Das Resultat des Denkprozesses heißt bei vielen nicht verzweifelte Resignation, sonder Artikulation – Aussprechen der eigenen Wünsche, Sehnsüchte, Forderungen. Das geschieht vielerorts laut, manchmal aber auch still, doch deswegen nicht weniger bewegend. So wie gestern....als eine Menschenkette die DDR von Nord nach Süd, von Ost nach West durchzog.....Sicherlich werden die Vorstellungen und Motive der Ungezählten, die sich da für 15 Minuten an den Händen hielten....sehr unterschiedlich sein. Einig waren sie mit Sicherheit im Zorn und in der entschiedenen Forderung, all jene zu bestrafen, die Macht und Ämter missbrauchten und so unser Land und seine Bürger verrieten.*

*Einig aber auch – das zu behaupten sei gewagt – in dem Willen, dieses Land als das ihre einzurichten. ....Der Prozess der demokratischen Erneuerung darf nicht stehen bleiben. Taten sind gefragt.“* (Neues Deutschland, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2)

Another example of this is a printed readers letter by Günter Buhlke on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1989, on page 2 with the header *“Was die Mehrheit nicht will”*, arguing that the people of the GDR should support the appeal of the intellectuals *“Für unser Land”* of November 29<sup>th</sup>, stating that the majority of GDR citizens do not want a market economy which could not protect the human dignity; do not want a capitalist society with millions of unemployed; do not want a democracy with a 5% hurdle (referring to the political system of the FRG, whereby a party needs a minimum of 5% to enter parliament); do not want a society where people opposing the nuclear deterrent strategy are stigmatised as being bad; do not want a society which hails human rights but at the same time denies its own citizens the basic right to work, to shelter, to health, education either partly or even completely.

This article cultivated fears by many GDR citizens that they would lose their basis of economic survival should unification come. This is supported by another article on the same day stating that 120,000 GDR refugees in the FRG are officially unemployed (Neues Deutschland, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 1)

The issue of economic and full political unification remains a dominant topic until the elections. Increasingly, the paper prints voices of opposition groups as well as international voices arguing that only two German states would be in the interest of the GDR as well as of a secure Europe. That most of these opposition groups or international voices are against the SED while supporting the same stance on this issue, gives the underlining position – namely opposing unification – more credibility. Nonetheless, the reporting remains extremely one-sided, and the same opposition groups or foreign commentators would not be quoted on other issues. On December 15<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the paper prints a plan of national unity formulated by the group *“Demokratie jetzt”*, which clearly dismisses the idea of instant unification. On December 14<sup>th</sup>, the paper quotes the British Labour politician Tony Clarke arguing that two German states would be in the interest of Europe: *“Zwei deutsche Staaten sind im europäischen Interesse”*. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> on page 2, the paper prints a quote of the former dissident now president of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel, arguing that the fate of the GDR was important for the future of Europe. On December 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> on page 1, the paper prints an interview with the futurologist Robert Jungk, who views the GDR as a great chance to create a truly democratic society, which could

become a world model. Viewing the looming economic crisis of capitalism, he warns to dismiss the chance of creating a more human system too early.

But the paper also continues to print opposition voices from within the GDR who also argue against unification. Also on the issue of December 16<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup>, the paper prints an article by Prof. Dr. Bernhard Graefrath, who analyses three conceptions for the future of the GDR: namely, Unification "*Anschluss*", a confederation "*Konföderation*" or a cooperation on the basis of contracts "*Vertragsgemeinschaft*". The article comes to the conclusion that only the latter makes sense, as the costs of the former would in the end be carried by the people of the GDR, and as only the latter possesses the possibility of a socialist alternative to the FRG. He too comes to the conclusion, that the question must be viewed within a larger European framework, namely that of peace and stability: "*Frage des Friedens und der Sicherheit*". (Neues Deutschland, December 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> 1989, pg 8). An article by the paper editor, Gerd Prokot, on December 15<sup>th</sup> (pg 2) with the Title: "*Wir leben doch nur einmal*", argues that only hard work, not instant unification, will bring prosperity to the GDR. He argues that the GDR may not be given the FRG as a Bankrupt state for free. At the moment, no demonstrations against unification, no reference to the mass unemployment inside the FRG seem to deter a great amount of GDR citizens to want instant unification. They seem to want to be part of this seemingly rich affluent society "*Überflussgesellschaft*", the quicker the better. But Prokot warns, if the last 40 years should be a warning to the people, then that to mistrust seemingly short paths and fast solutions.

To conclude on this topic, throughout the entire period the paper remained on track with the SED on critical issues for the continuation of the SED power in society as well as for the continuation of the GDR on the basis of a socialist state. Thus, the majority of journalists remained SED ideologues, even if they belonged to the softline wing of the party. As such, the party continued to argue for a democratic socialist state, one that only a reformed SED could guarantee. In this, the paper argues in form of own commentaries for this, but it also becomes the platform for younger, reform orientated SED members, foreign observers as well as opposition groups all advocating an independent GDR. In doing so, the form of reporting appears extremely one-sided, cultivating fears that a unification would import an unfair social model, one in which the majority of the GDR's citizens would end up jobless and homeless.

Beginning during the first half of December, the paper begins covering the preparations and conduction of the extraordinary party congress, discussing what the party needs to do in order to successfully renew itself. In this, the paper becomes a platform for a

democratization of the party, arguing on December 4<sup>th</sup> on page 4, that the half-hearted attempts by the current SED leadership to bring about change and to undo and investigate the mistakes of the past are embittering and disappointing the party's grass roots. Additionally, during the same time, the paper begins discussing how best to reform the economy, becoming a platform for both SED specialists on the matter, high ranking managers of companies inside the GDR, academics and western sources. On January 31<sup>st</sup> on page 2, the paper quotes the "*Süddeutsche Zeitung*" from the 27/28<sup>th</sup> of January, which argued that a monetary unification is highly complicated, if implemented too early it would lead to chaos. Furthermore, it suggests that both economic and social reforms inside the GDR need to be carried out in a fashion that would be accepted and supported by its people. On February 14<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the paper quotes scientists of West Berlin who argue that a monetary unification between the GDR and the FRG would lead to catastrophe. Although becoming a platform for different voices, the picture conveyed remains extremely one-sided; the paper does not attempt to inform the readers on the possible alternatives bringing differing views, rather here too it attempts to foster fear of and opposition to a unification with the West.

Where the paper does attempt to offer some diverse standpoints for its readers is the issue of economic reform particularly the free market (N.B. this diversification is still very limited in the way that the reforms should not include a monetary union with the FRG). Additionally, it begins to inform its readers on what may lie ahead, informing them on market economy terminology and concepts. On February 21<sup>st</sup> on page 5, for example, the paper discusses the pros and cons of public ownerships quoting the "*Demokratischer Aufbruch*" arguing for a privatization of most public companies. On December 13<sup>th</sup> on page 4, the paper prints an article by an economics Professor, Prof. Dr. A. Köhler, explaining what is meant by the term „Joint Venture“. On February 21<sup>st</sup> on page 5, the paper informs GDR citizens where they can receive West-German financial support if they wanted to start an own business. Additionally, the paper begins to discuss the problem of a growing number of unemployed inside the GDR, demanding the quicker implementation of retraining.

At the same time, the paper begins discussing the question of compensation for people dispossessed under the SED-regime. On December 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> on page 1 and 2, the paper states that the CDU under Lothar de Maizière, no longer stands to a socialist perspective, instead demanding that state companies should be returned to their former owners. According to the "*Neues Deutschland*", the CDU, however, fails in delivering an answer on how the accomplishments of the working class should be secured. The paper clearly

disagrees with the CDU, arguing that without the ownership of the people over the industry, a truly sovereign people could not exist: *“Ohne Volkseigentum ist eine wirkliche Volkssouveränität nicht zu haben”* (pg 8). Additionally, the paper addresses the issue of compensating former real estate owners. On March 7<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the paper prints an exchange of correspondence between the former and new owners of a house. The old owners claim their ownership, asking whether the new owners had not been aware when they bought the house that it was rightfully the property of someone else? As a conclusion on this debate, the paper prints an article on March 8<sup>th</sup> on page 1, that demands that the property rights inside the GDR should not be challenged. Again, this debate appears rather one-sided. Additionally, it surely fosters fears of a unification with the West, especially for voters who might lose their homes as a consequence.

As to the issue of right wing tendencies inside the GDR, the paper begins to cover the issue only as of December 1989, while still continuing its focus on the foul practice in the FRG concerning Neo-Nazi tendencies (as will still be discussed later on). The first example that this content analysis found was: *“Die Stunde der Rechten in der DDR”* (Neues Deutschland, December 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 7).

The election period is barely a subject in the “Neues Deutschland”, which only addresses the issue until the end of February. The election, however, is indirectly covered by the paper, as it follows the programme of the SED-PDS on its important issues: to give a reformed SED a second chance, to prevent a unification with the FRG on the basis of a continued socialist GDR and to implement economic reforms on a socialist basis.

#### **5.2.5. The “Neue Zeit” after the resignation of Erich Honecker**

As to the focus questions, to begin with the expulsion of Honecker and Mielke in December 1989, the paper merely informs about these, but does not write about these issues in detail. As to the storming of the *Stasi* offices, the paper initially informs its readers mainly as a matter of fact. Later, the underlining message is a welcoming of the end to the work of the *Stasi*, and criticism towards the reticence of former *Stasi* employees. On December 8<sup>th</sup> on page 2 for example, the paper informs about the visit of journalists to the *Stasi* headquarters. The paper concludes that while the employees were ready to answer questions, no answers were given to the extent of *Stasi* surveillance over society.

As to further question of scandals of the past, the paper follows a very restricted reporting

on this as was the case above. Instead, it soon comes to print articles questioning the legitimacy of the SED's constitutionally set dominant role. On November 15<sup>th</sup> on page 2, for example, it becomes a platform for the opposition group "*Demokratie jetzt*", which is demanding a referendum on the leading role of the SED as stated in Article 1 of the constitution. Furthermore, it does not only criticise the political leading role of the party, but also the enforced communist propaganda dominating society. On October 24<sup>th</sup> on page 2, for example, the paper quotes the Chairwoman of the Union Tuition and Education, Helga Labs. She argues that up to then schools had to help students receive a Marxist-Leninist "World view". The paper argues against this, stating that while the law concerning education stipulates that students should receive "basic knowledge" about Marxist-Leninist principles, the law does not state that schools should indoctrinate their students on the topic. It concludes "*Unsere Schule ist, als Schule für alle Kinder des Volkes, keine Bekenntnis- und Weltanschauungsschule, und sie kann und darf es nicht sein*". This indirect approach of opposing the leading role of the SED continues in the form of mentioning demands of demonstrators in Leipzig who call for an end of the leadership claim of the SED as well as for new travel laws without restrictions (Neue Zeit, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1989 pg 1+2; Neue Zeit, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2).

Progressively, this indirect approach to voice opposition to the SED's leading role is replaced with direct criticism, while still also reporting on demands by opposition groups on the matter. At the beginning of January 1990, the „Neue Zeit“ criticises the unbroken influence of the SED-PDS on the electronic media, arguing that the apparent impartiality of the SED-journalists in the electronic media was nothing more than hypocrisy, comparing the current media productions those of the former „Black-channel“<sup>3</sup>. On January 10<sup>th</sup>, on page 1, the paper reports on opposition groups meeting in the Magdeburg Dom, who criticise the factual continued leading role of the SED in the media, companies and state affairs.

Additionally, the paper begins to criticise the work of the new, softline SED leadership and concentrated on issues important for the imminent transition, supporting the demonstrations, the beginning of reforms as well as offering an alternative view to the refugee problem, to mention a few.

Examples of these included::

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<sup>3</sup> The "Black-channel" was a political propagandist TV-production in the GDR, moderated by the SED-Hardliner Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler. Its aim was to present West-German news with ideological interpretations in order to expose the propaganda of the so-called "Class-enemy".

On October 19<sup>th</sup> – only 1 day after the replacement of Honecker – the “Neue Zeit” brought an own commentary under the headline „*Neue Zeit Kommentiert*“:

- *Neue Realitäten und Dialog..... Mehr Offenheit in den Medien..... In unserem Land gibt es den beginnenden Dialog, es gab auch Demonstrationen in manchen Städten, am herausragenden vielleicht Leipzig. Man hört gelegentlich die Meinung, auf der Strasse würden keine Probleme gelöst. Das ist wohl wahr. Die Menschen die demonstrieren - und denen man vielleicht zuerz einmal guten Willen unterstellen soll - wollten den Dialog auch gar nicht auf der Strasse führen. Sie wollen ihn unterstützen, ihn ermutigen, mit Zustande bringen. Es geschieht etwas in diesem unseren Lande. Es gibt keine Patentrezepte, aber früher oder später müssen wir in das Wasser unserer widersprüchlichen Realitäten springen, wenn der Dialog in allen seinen Formen uns weiterbringen soll. Dafür gilt es, zu arbeiten, zu handeln und auch zu streiten.*“ (Neue Zeit, October 19th 1989, pg 2).

Here, the newspaper began demanding a public dialog and it commenced to diverge from the SED standpoint, by stating that with the demonstrations, the people - whom one should attest good faith to begin with - are attempting to bring about change and a public dialog with the regime.

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Newspaper began to address the issue of emigration, diverging from the previous SED standpoint that the situation was caused by the FRG attempting to destabilise the GDR, and diverging from the “Neues Deutschland” which had stated that the GDR would loose no tear over the refugees. In this the “Neue Zeit” quoted the „Rudo Pravo“, which argued that the emigration was caused by internal GDR problems and that the argument that the situation had been caused by the FRG was only half-true:

- *„Die Welle der Ausreise von DDR-Bürgern war offenbar ein Katalysator der in der DDR existierenden Probleme. Es sei richtig, dass die SED Führung nicht bei der Feststellung stehengeblieben ist, die Emigration sei durch den von Seiten der BRD geführten psychologischen Krieg hervorgerufen worden, denn dies habe de Wahrheit nur zum Teil getroffen“* (Neue Zeit, October 23rd 1989, page 1).

Increasingly, the paper addresses the reasons of why so many people are leaving, demanding change and at the same time opposing the continued state repressions. On

October 25th on page 2 the paper writes: *“Der Versuchung zur Anpassung oft erlegen”*  
*“Evangelische Freikirchen zur Situation in der DDR”*

- *“Mit Betroffenheit und Schmerz erfahren wir in diesen Tagen vor der anhaltend großen Zahl vor allem junger Menschen, die unser Land verlassen. Zugleich sind wir erschrocken und Empört über den Einsatz von Gewalt gegen Menschen, die in diesem Land bleiben wollen, sich aber in friedlichen Demonstrationen für Veränderungen eingesetzt haben. Die Notwendigkeit grundsätzlicher gesellschaftlicher Veränderungen ergibt sich aus einer tiefen moralischer Not. Der täglich erlebte Widerspruch zwischen der in den öffentlichen Medien dargestellten und der tatsächlichen Wirklichkeit wird nicht länger hingenommen“.*

Additionally, the paper gradually more becomes a mirror on what societal discussion exists as well as a platform for the emerging opposition groups, as also suggested by the article above. In this, the paper begins to bear witness of the changes occurring, and thus brings certain subjects and facts into public light.

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, under the heading *“Demokratie macht Arbeit” – Diskussionsforum im kleinen Saal des Leipziger Gewandhauses*“ the newspaper reported on a meeting of over 500 people, who got together to have a “free and open Discussion“. Participants included SED-members, theologists and opposition activists including Petra Lux, spokesperson for the „Neues Forum“. Discussion topics included the catastrophic situation in the healthcare and social welfare. Interestingly, the paper mentions the spokeswoman for the “Neues Forum”, before the group actually received legal permission to form. (Neue Zeit, October 24<sup>th</sup> 1989, pg 3). Subsequent articles clearly positioned the newspaper on the side of the demonstrators with headlines such as: *“Demonstrationen: Wille nach Demokratisierung hält niemand mehr auf: Bisher machtvollste Demonstration in Leipzig.”* (Neue Zeit November 8<sup>th</sup> 1989, pg 1+2). On November 18<sup>th</sup>, the “Neue Zeit” printed a statement by the opposition group “Demokratie Jetzt” under the headline *“Demokratie jetzt zu Reisefragen”*, which addressed the question of travel restrictions, arguing that the freedom to travel was an elementary human right, which the state was not allowed to restrict (Neue Zeit November 18<sup>th</sup> 1989, pg 2). On December 4<sup>th</sup>, on page 3, the paper printed parts of the founding call of the “Green league”, the un-partisan umbrella establishment of the environmental organisations in the GDR. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> on page 3 (Full page), the paper prints the programme declaration and statutes of the Neues Forum. Additionally, the paper becomes the mouthpiece of minority groups within the GDR demanding more rights. On



January 24<sup>th</sup> on page 3, for example, the paper reports on initiative groups fighting for the rights of the Sorbian minority in the country.

At the same time, the paper begins to foster a discussion on the need of economic reforms inside the GDR. On October 25<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the paper prints a commentary by Dr. Norbert Schwaldt with the title: *“Ohne Leistung kein Wohlstand”*. In it he writes that yes much is wrong in the GDR, especially concerning the question of provisions for the population. But, he argues, the problems go deeper. Workers were regularly told how good their work was and how productive the GDR was. This did not really motivate to do more. Additionally, lack of materials led to involuntary breaks, which had to be compensated through weekend work and overtime. Workers were lured with extra benefits to do this. However, in the end the management lost its leverage in telling the workers what to do, as these then often threatened to quit work. The article suggests to let them quit then. Who is not willing to work, should leave, instead of receiving a pay rise. It continues by arguing that the desolate economic situation was enhanced through the emigration of younger workers. These are lured into the west with promises of “wealth through work”: *“daß Arbeit guten Wohlstand möglich machen kann”*. Additionally, consumer goods that had become standard in western capitalist societies, are rare inside the GDR. The article calls for an end to this, arguing that only far reaching reforms could increase the economic performance of the GDR, emulating the FRG’s promise of “wealth through work”. As a conclusion the article states that all the cries for more reform, for the end of travel restrictions, for a truly democratic society will come to nothing if the GDR – its people and economy -do to take action. All ideas of a brighter future depend on the people inside the GDR and their ability to improve the products of the economy: *“Also alle Forderungen dieser Tage hängen von unserem Handeln selbst ab. Gelingt uns keine echte Leistung mit guten Produkten, werden wir schon in absehbarer Zeit noch weiter zurückbleiben”*.

On November 1<sup>st</sup> 1989, the “Neue Zeit” issued a statement by the CDU leadership that demanded that the reasons for the people leaving the GDR should be identified and addressed by the state leadership. What appears remarkable is that in the same statement the CDU demanded that the state should abide to what was stipulated by law, especially in relation to the election laws – publicly referring to the election fraud of May 1989. Additionally, the CDU called for a “public dialog” (Neue Zeit, November 1<sup>st</sup> 1989).

In the same issue the paper printed an open letter by the head of the CDU-fraction, Wolfgang Heyl, to Interior Minister Dickel, under the heading *“Forderung nach Legalisierung der Tätigkeit des Neuen Forums”*. In it he demands that the decision not to

allow the legal formation of the “Neues Forum“ be re-considered, as the decision to ban it would not be based on legal grounds :

- *“Bei dieser Entscheidung und der Art des Zustandekommens vermisste ich die Beachtung von Grundsätzen der sozialistischen Rechtsstaatlichkeit, wonach Entscheidungen nur auf der Grundlage der Verfassung, der Gesetze und anderen Rechtsvorschriften (in diesem Falle wohl die “Verordnung über die Gründung und Tätigkeit von Vereinigungen” vom 6. November 1975 GBl. Teil I, Nr.44, Seite 723ff ergeben dürfen).....Handlungsbedarf besteht daher nach meiner Auffassung zunächst darin, die Gesetzlichkeit herzustellen, um so die Voraussetzung für eine sachgerechte Prüfung des nicht nur von mir als berechtigt angesehenen Anliegens zu schaffen....Ich halte es daher für erforderlich, dass der oben genannte Bescheid des Ministeriums des Inneren offiziell und öffentlich zurückgezogen wird und dass sich die Tätigkeit des “Neuen Forums” auf legaler Grundlage vollziehen kann”.*

On December 8<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 1, the paper prints a letter from CDU members titled *“Aus tiefer Sorge um explosive Lage im Lande”* writing to the governments of the GDR and the FRG, stressing that en face of the explosive situation the only way forward was through a confederation between the GDR and the FRG on the lines of the current borders.

On December 12<sup>th</sup> on page 1 and 3, the paper critically addresses its role in how the media became an instrument of the SED-leadership, laying passively, beaten under a bombardment of taboos. Furthermore, the paper writes that the complicity of the journalist was, however, not simply undone through critical writing “between” the lines, but instead by simply not printing ADN releases and by beginning a more unbiased reporting.

Increasingly, the paper also becomes a forum for discussion on whether indeed, how the new SED-leadership claims, only a reformed truly democratic socialism could be the answer for the GDR citizens. On February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1989, on page 3, for example, the paper prints a commentary by Jürgen Hofmann, with the title “Socialism – yes or no?” In it, he concludes that after all that happened in the name of socialism, who can today still argue that only socialism (reformed or not) could make people free, happy, and rich? The author

argues that he prefers an ecological, peaceful, social state built on solidarity and without ideological extremes.

With the question of political and economic unification looming, the “Neue Zeit” began to address the possible routes the country could take. In this, the paper in comparison to the “Neues Deutschland”, appears to attempt to portray pros and cons of unification with the FRG. As already mentioned, on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1989, leading GDR intellectuals issued an appeal to the GDR citizens under the headline “Für unser Land”, articulating the wish to implement a “third way” and arguing against a unification with West-Germany. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, on page 3, the paper prints “Thoughts to the call ‘Für unser Land’” by other intellectuals. In an open Letter to Stefan Heyn, Prof. Dr. sc. Helmut Koch, Member of the “Akademie der Wissenschaften”, writes that he would not sign the “Aufruf” “Für unser Land”. This as he does not see the “either or” argument brought up by the call. He argues that much went wrong, including environmental problems, and that the GDR alone would not be in the position to rebuild the country:

- *“Unsere Empfindungen bei der plötzlichen Öffnung der Mauer haben uns und der Welt gezeigt, dass die Deutschen in ihren beiden Staaten eine Nation geblieben sind und weiter bleiben wollen..... Eine Konföderation der beiden deutschen Staaten scheint mir die richtige Grundlage für die politische Organisation der deutschen Nation zu sein.”*

On the same page, Trilse Finkelstein argues in “Ein neuer deutscher Schreckensruf” that she will sign the statement “Für unser Land”. She fears a unification arguing:

- *“nennen sie es Wiedervereinigung, gemeint ist Wieder-Herrschaft des großen Geldes auch hier”...“Sie wollen Einvernehmen, kaufen, einen Ausverkauf Inszenieren. Sie stellen Bedingungen: erst Sozialismus abschaffen, dann gibt es Geld. Nach Rechtsbegriff nennt man das Erpressung”.....“Im Namen der 27 ermordeten meiner Familie bin ich für den Bestand und grundlegende Erneuerung der DDR und unterschreibe Stefan Heyms und Christa Wolfs Appell”.*

On the same page under the headline “Wir haben die Moral nicht gepachtet” Helga Schubert and Prof. Dr. Johannes Helm write:

- *“Warum wir den “Aufruf für unser Land” nicht unterschreiben möchten....Es wurde nirgends mitgeteilt, was mit der Unterschrift*

*zum Aufruf bezweckt werden soll....Es wird eine sozialistische Alternative zur Bundesrepublik propagiert. Fragt man nach dem Sinn des Begriffes Sozialismus, so erhält man zur Antwort, er sei bisher deformiert worden, nun käme es darauf an, seinen wahren Gehalt zu realisieren. Doch worin dieser besteht, müsse neu erarbeitet werden. So soll man einer Sache zustimmen, von der man nicht weiss, worin sie eigentlich besteht. Von der ausschliesslich zentralen Planwirtschaft und der Vergesellschaftung der Produktionsmittel usw. Ist man völlig abgerückt. Meint man vielleicht nur noch die Notwendigkeit eines sozialen Netzes? In diesem Fall könnte man von kapitalistischen Ländern viel lernen, z.B. von Schweden oder der BRD. ..."*

They continue to argue that the call was a demagogic "Either-or" comparison. On the one side the peaceful, fair, ecologic and permissive society built up on solidarity. On the other side a material and moral buyout through foreign economic necessities and unacceptable conditions by the FRG. They write that these cheap black and white pictures were violating reality. They criticise that all ideas that had been raised up to then concerning a confederation, contractual unity or other forms of cooperation are being ignored, as are constructive economic offers by the FRG. They conclude by stating that this reminds them to the embarrassing propaganda calls from before: "who is not for us, is against us".

This, reporting on a "third way", is not always in the form of mentioning the term directly. On January 24<sup>th</sup> on page 3, for example, the paper prints a commentary by Pastor Harald Schmidt with the title *"Führt uns ein 'Deutscher Bund' zu Konföderation, Frieden und Einigkeit?"* In it, Schmidt speaks out for a confederation of two German states, where both cooperate but still follow their own interests. This balanced reporting, allowing voices of a "third way" to be articulated in the paper, only exists until end of January 1990. Thereafter, the paper prints voices of either for Unification, or simply neutral articles on the subject. As of the second half of February, the paper increasingly seems to follow the stance of the new East-German CDU leadership, where the question is no longer whether unification should come, but rather what benefits this brings the people and how this should occur. An example here is an article on February 21<sup>st</sup> on page 1, where the new CDU-leader Lothar de Mezière clearly says yes to unification, but without a dismantling of the welfare state: *"Für Vereinigung ohne Sozialabbau"*. Generally, the underlining message seems to be that unification will not make the situation worse for the GDR citizens, but rather better. This is also supported by an article on February 27<sup>th</sup> on page 5, stating that while the current time of change brings a certain degree of risk, it also brings big chances.

As of February 1990 the paper also begins writing about the pros and cons of a currency union between the FRG and the GDR. While at the beginning this seems to be a balanced discussion, where both support and opposition to the matter is mentioned, by the second half of February the paper increasingly takes the CDU-stance propagating a currency-union before a political unification has taken place. On February 7<sup>th</sup> on page 1, for example, the paper still portrayed the pros and cons of a currency unification, by printing comments of Chancellor Kohl demanding an immediate negotiation on the matter on the one hand, on the other it prints a comment by the President of the West German Central Bank, who argues that the currency unification was not necessary. This changes during the second half of February 1990. An example here is an article on February 27<sup>th</sup> on page two arguing that with the currency union the GDR stands nothing to lose, but everything to win: *“Währungsunion: DDR hat nichts zu verlieren, aber alles zu gewinnen”*. While the paper seemed to offer a well balanced forum for discussion, also dissenting from the CDU stance at times, between February to March 1990, the paper increasingly follows the stance of the new CDU-leadership on these questions. Undoubtedly, this is influenced by the beginning of the election campaign time.

As of the beginning of January 1990, the paper increasingly begins to inform its readers on the concepts and issues related to the coming market economy. An example here is a series of articles under the heading “Market economy – what is it?” by an Economist from Cologne, Roland Tittel. Topics included: *“Mitbestimmung, Streik und Aussperrung”* on March 13<sup>th</sup> on page 3 or *“Das Soziale Netz: Wie soll es aussehen?”* on March 15<sup>th</sup> on page 3. The paper generally welcomes the coming market economy, here too following the official CDU stance. Examples here include an article on March 18<sup>th</sup>, arguing that business freedom will bring prosperity for all, and that foreign capital will secure work places.

The “Neue Zeit” also only addresses the issue of right-wing problems inside the GDR at a fairly late time, albeit according to the findings of this content analysis, before the “Neue Deutschland” does so. On November 15<sup>th</sup>, the newspaper quotes the Chair of the Jewish Central Committee, warning of a renaissance of right wing tendencies also inside the GDR (Neue Zeit, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 1).

As to the question of the election coverage, the topic receives greater importance in comparison to the “Neues Deutschland”. Nonetheless, it does seem that the paper as of February 1990 departs from a seemingly unbiased reporting it had increasingly acquired as of October 1989, now increasingly articulating the party programme of the CDU (as

mentioned before)<sup>4</sup>.

### **Further issues:**

During the research for the qualitative analysis, further observations were made, which did however not follow a clear methodical approach, but which appeared worthy of note in portraying the role and actions of both respective newspapers. These are elaborated on below.

#### *“Neues Deutschland”*

What appears interesting, is the attempt by the “Neues Deutschland” to discredit the West-German political and especially economic system as much as possible. One dominant topic which can be identified from May until the first half of November 1989, is the apparently strong Neo-Nazi tendencies inside the FRG, which the “Neues Deutschland” on the one hand claims was very strongly visible during that time (especially with the electoral success of the *“Republikanische Partei”*) and on the other hand, argues that it had never really been targeted inside the FRG but rather even fostered by the government since the collapse of Nazi Germany. Examples of these are:

1. *“Neonazis terrorisierten in Augsburg jüdische Bürger”* (Neues Deutschland, 10. May 1989, pg 5)
2. a commentary on June 7<sup>th</sup> on pge 2 with the title *“BRD-Justitz im Jahre 40”* writes: *„Nun fahndet die Polizei in der BRD schon 48 Tage nach dem zu lebenslanger Haft verurteilten Massenmörder Weise. Natürlich vergeblich. Der SS-Mann ist und bleibt verschwunden. Der Bundesgerichtshof hatte bekanntlich dem ehemaligen Aufseher im faschistischen KZ Auschwitz-Birkenau die Bestätigung des Urteils mit der Post nach Hause geschickt, wo er, auf Grund seines Revisionsantrages von Haft verschont, als freier Mann lebte, so dass er rechtzeitig untertauchen konnte.“*;
3. *„Protest gegen Einrichtung eines neonazistischen Schulungszentrums“* (Neues Deutschland, September 6th,

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<sup>4</sup> On December 15 / 16 1989, the party publicly stated that it henceforth will foster the transformation towards a market economy as well as the unification with the FRG. Research for this dissertation suggests that following this official change of dogma, the party began to pressurise its media to foster this view.

1989, pg 5)

4. „*Besorgnis in Berlin (West): Neonazis auch in den Schulen weiter auf dem Vormarsch*“ (Neues Deutschland, September 13th, 1989, pg 7)
5. „*12 889 Nazis seit 1945 in der DDR verurteilt. Vor Juristen in Hamburg: Tiefe Kluft zur BRD-Praxis*“, (Neues Deutschland, November 1st, 1989, pg 1) arguing that in the FRG the judges did not successfully punish Nazi-criminals, partly because a vast number of former Nazi-judges simply continued their work in the FRG.

Indeed, criticism of the Western model seems to be a consistent topic in the “Neues Deutschland”. Another dominant theme in this direction is the rising unemployment in the FRG, the socially unfair market economy, as well as the brutal treatment of opposition activists usually opposing western rearmament. Examples of these include:

- i) “*Weitere Friedenskämpfer in der BRD festgenommen*” (Neues Deutschland, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 5)
- ii) “*Wer hört die Schreie der vielen Kinder?. BRD: 400 000 Misshandlungen und 100 Todesopfer im Jahr*” (Neues Deutschland, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 6)
- iii) “*Obdachlosenhelfer rufen in Berlin (West) Notstand aus.....7000 auf der Strasse*”. (Neues Deutschland, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1989, pg 1)

These articles all suggest that the newspaper attempted to create a relative picture of the FRG, implying that not everything was as great as many claimed. There is no doubt that these articles stimulated fears of many GDR citizens, that a market-economy may not always be better than the security of a socialist style, regulated economy, where everyone had a job.

#### “Neue Zeit”

Interesting here too is the attempt by the newspaper to discredit the West-German political and especially economic system as much as possible, between May to October 1989. Examples here include:

- “*In der BRD mehren sich die Zeichen der `öffentlichen Armut*” (Neue Zeit, July 12<sup>th</sup> 1989, pg 2)
- “*BRD: Immer weniger bezahlbare Wohnungen*” (Neue Zeit, July

23<sup>rd</sup>, 1989, pg 5)

- *"BRD: Hohe Arbeitslosigkeit. 7,3 % im erwerbsfähigem Alter ohne Job"* (Neue Zeit, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2)
- Quoting the comment of an unemployed citizen of the FRG saying that as an unemployed one lives like in a ghetto: *"US-Nachrichtenagentur AP: Zur Situation der Arbeitslosen in der Bundesrepublik.....Du lebst als Arbeitsloser wie im Ghetto"* (August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 2).

It too concentrates on the apparently strong Neo-Nazi tendencies in the FRG. Examples of this are:

- *"Besorgniserregende neonazistische Rückkehr"* (Neue Zeit, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1989, pg 1)
- *"Neonazi-Chef: Unglaublicher Zustrom"* (Neue Zeit, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 1)
- *"Volksblatt: Nazis bestimmen über Deutschstämmigkeit"* (Neue Zeit, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1989, pg 1)

This first article quotes the Italian press writing about the alarming comeback of neo-Nazis in the FRG. The second article quotes the leader of the German neo-Nazi party *"Die Republikaner"*, stating how many new members the party is currently receiving. The third article quotes the *"Volksblatt"* that argues that in West Berlin, the question of judging a Polish refugee as being "German" is done through old Nazi SS-documents. Therefore, the best chances of receiving a German citizenship has the refugee whose grandfather was an active Nazi member.

Additionally to becoming a platform for political opposition groups, the paper of January 1990 increasingly also becomes the platform for green activists and environmental questions. On January 17<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the paper informs about plans by Greenpeace to open an office in East-Berlin. On February 7<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the paper print a CDU commentary arguing that environmental problems need to be dealt with now: *"CDU: Vorsorge statt Nachsorge....Umweltprobleme müssen jetzt angegangen werden."* On February 27<sup>th</sup> on page 6 the paper asks whether ecology will be forgotten: *"Bleibt Ökologie auf der Strecke?"*. On March 17<sup>th</sup> on page 2 the paper warns that a ecological disaster is near: *"Ökologischer Kollaps droht"*.



## **6. The role of the Media during the transformation process**

In the introduction to his book: *“Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR”*, Arnulf Kutsch (1990) argues that in the case of the GDR, if the media had helped to initiated the *“Wende”* then only in a negative sense. Kutsch argues that it was precisely the stark contradictory political, economical and social picture as portrayed by the media, vis-à-vis what was perceived by the people, that was one dominant motive in bringing the people to streets of Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin in autumn of 1989 (Kutsch, 1990, pg 9). There is no doubt that the constant propaganda attempts by the regime, portraying a completely different reality to that perceived by the people, and constantly portraying just how far apart the regime was from the wishes of the people, was one strong influence in disillusioning the people with regards to the intents of the regime as well as in bringing the people to demand change. However, as has been identified previously, the GDR citizens were used to a stark contrast between what was described by their own newspapers vis-à-vis what was described by the West-German media as well as to the reality as perceived by them. They were aware of this propaganda attempt by the regime for decades. The argument therefore, that this stark contrast between what the regime said and what was perceived by the people was the factor that brought the people to the streets, is thus not entirely convincing. Indeed, the findings of this dissertation research point to a different conclusion as to the role of the media.

As described in the chapter “Methodical approach”, the research of this dissertation is divided into firstly an “output” (journalists/media intent) and secondly and “outcome” (effect on the process) analysis. When analysing the role of the media during the transformation process, it makes sense to continue this differentiation. The first, “output” analysis looks at the output of the media in order to investigate whether the respective media and its journalists favourably supported the transformation process. The second, “outcome” analysis attempts to shed light into the question whether the media did indeed have a positive influence on the process.

### **5.1.1 Output**

There is no doubt that, up to the replacement of Honecker with Krenz, all official media served state propaganda. They said nothing about the blatant election-fraud of May 1989. They kept quiet about issues of political mismanagement and corruption. They did not address the issues, which brought thousands of GDR citizens to the streets of 1989 and to flee their own country. Although at times the individual journalist did attempt to broaden the

limits imposed on them, and although they often followed critical reporting in form of “in between the line” criticism, this was very limited and rare. When finally the regime was in retreat, however, allowing a liberalisation and even showing signs of a possible collapse, the journalists were the first to notice this, due to their proximity to the leadership. As the media system was so closely under direct leadership control, any signs of problems within the leadership immediately became apparent to the media *nomenklatura*. Realizing this, the media began exploiting the power vacuum that was arising, and the possibility emerged that the media system and its journalists could increasingly develop as an independent actor in the political reform process.

The analysis of this dissertation suggests that this came cautious and slow at first, but became visible at the latest with the fall of Honecker, when all societal organizations, including the block parties and the media began expanding their autonomous space of action and began breaking previous taboo topics. The content analysis as well as the interviews suggests, that this occurred initially and more strongly in the case of the block-party media, and then in the media of the SED newspapers. In the former, the journalists finally saw their possibility to act freely, to break on previous taboo topics thus helping the unfolding democratization process. The media then no longer wanted to limit themselves to the role of simply bearing witness to the events occurring, but wanted instead to become an independent actor in the developing process, and thus to foster their vision of the future. As had already been identified, often the journalists of the block-party media had become members of these parties as this was the only possibility to express at least limited opposition while still confirming to the system. Therefore, it is important to state once again that this meant that they were no fervent SED-supporters to begin with. Now that this system was finally showing the first signs of its demise, these journalists took the opportunity to foster and to amplify the process taking place.

Additionally, being the organ of their respective parties, the block party media began to support the new positioning of these parties in an emerging multi-party system, and began to become a platform for calls to end the leading role of the SED. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1989, the LDPD newspaper “*Der Morgen*” printed an article by the LDPD leader Manfred Gerlach, in which he directly questioned the leading role of the SED and thus portrayed the first “open” division within the regime. With this he was the first leading East-German politician to openly criticise the SED leadership, with this article 5 days before Honecker resigned. Even so, many of the block party journalists, while opposing the current system and the SED dominance, did not oppose the idea of a socialist system per se. Similar goes for many journalists of the SED media. These can basically be broken down into two

groups: Hardline SED-members and reform (Softline) members. The former attempted to limit the reform process taking place, while the latter attempted to support the reform process within the party as well as society. Both, nevertheless saw the future of the GDR as an independent socialist alternative to the FRG, under a truly democratic leadership of the SED. When analysing the role of the media during the transformation process, one needs to separate the role of block party media on the one hand, and the SED-media on the other. Both contributed to the unfolding process, albeit in different ways.

*Block party media.* Interviews suggest that the media of the block parties, at certain times already before 1989, began to expand their limits and to break on previous taboo topics. CDU- Bundestag Member of Parliament, Arnold Vaatz, argues that there had always existed a “scratching on the limits imposed” on part of these bloc party journalists (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008). For example, the CDU paper “Die Union” in 1986-87, printed parts of a diary of Victor Klemperer, which became extremely popular. Victor Klemperer had published a book called “*LTI: Notizbuch eines Philologen*“ (*Lingua Tertii Imperii*) in which he basically analysed the language of the third reich. The reason why the book had become popular in the GDR, was not because one wanted to learn about the language of the third reich, but because one recognised that the stereotypes with which he labeled the language of the third reich, were identical to the stereotypes of the language of the GDR (referred to by Klemperer as the language of the „Fourth reich“) (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008). Victor Klemperer had become a significant cultural figure of the GDR, supporting communism while attacking its practice inside the GDR. He thus became a symbol of opposition to the form of communism as implemented inside the GDR, and thus his diaries became so popular. The regime did not intervene, as it was “merely” a publication of the diaries of a well-known supporter of communism and citizen of the GDR. Nonetheless, it stands as dominant example of how the media inside the GDR attempted to expand their limits and to articulate opposition. Nevertheless, although it is true that these examples occurred, they were predominately limited to indirect criticisms or “between the lines” criticism and occurred fairly rarely. On the other hand, this indirect opposition existed and is important to mention.

The content analysis suggests that although the “Neue Zeit” remained on track with the SED doctrine largely until the resignation of Honecker, nevertheless, the newspaper did begin to divert from the rigid SED-newspapers and in this began supporting an emerging liberalisation process already in the final months of the Honecker era. One important aspect here is that the newspaper already at the beginning of October began addressing why so many East Germans are leaving, bringing up problems within East Germany,

rather than simply portraying the developments as a plan of the “class-enemy”. The article by Wolfgang Hesse<sup>5</sup> on October 4<sup>th</sup>, suggests that changes were needed within the country, and also articulates that these are already taking place. This is a stark difference to the “Neues Deutschland”, who at that point still does not see that a democratic-discussion is needed.

With the replacement of Honecker, the paper soon takes over an active role in supporting the democratization process. This mainly occurs in following ways:

1. By taking sides with the demonstrators, the paper fulfils a twofold support. Firstly, by beginning to articulate critical reporting it sends a signal to the people that the form of censorship as had existed before is over, actively portraying change as well as indicating that the regime was in retreat. Secondly, it articulates the demonstrations taking place and begins a public dialogue about the demands of the demonstrators, as well as on the best future development. Additionally, by doing this it increases the pressure on the regime to allow more liberties, as even the official organisations are beginning to demand these. Furthermore, it delegitimises attempts by the regime to portray the demonstrators as “rioters”, sending an alternative signal to the CDU’s own voters than was spread by the SED-media.
2. It began a discussion about the internal problems of the GDR. As mentioned above, this already began before the resignation of Honecker, but increased in intensity thereafter. The paper, for example, addressed corruption and mismanagement of the past and perhaps more importantly of the present SED leadership, attempting to foster a continued erosion of party legitimacy and support. Additionally, it began to address the issue of right-wing tendencies inside the GDR, something that had officially not existed in the GDR hitherto. This topic became highly relevant in the East-German and unified German society after the “*Wende*”, and it is therefore rightly addressed. With this the paper assumed the role of an *Agenda-Setting* “output”.
3. The paper began to demand serious democratic control mechanisms, an end to the leading role of the SED and to the travel restrictions as well as continued state repressions.
4. The paper begins covering political events taking place, offering the initiators and participants of these events a possibility to become known to a wider audience as

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<sup>5</sup> As mentioned before, in the article Hesse begins to address the problems inside the GDR as one factor in the refugee crisis, instead of simply blaming the FRG, comparing the GDR to a house where much went wrong and needs repairing.

well as making public the topics of discussion.

5. It became a platform for the emerging oppositional groups / people, either by mentioning their formations, meetings, demands and people, or by allowing these to publish their founding proclamations and statements. Again, this supports these groups to become known to a wider public as well as to transport their messages. At the same time, it helped to de-demonize these groups. A dominant example here is the paper mentioning the spokesperson for the “Neues Forum”, before this forum was actually legalized. Additionally the open letter of Wolfgang Heyl on November 1<sup>st</sup>, demanding the legalisation of the “Neues Forum” suggests that the paper began fostering an increase in the public’s awareness on these groups and that the CDU supporters no longer see them as a threat, something brought forward by the SED leadership.
6. It supports calls for an end to the dominant role of the SED in society. Indirectly at first, this increases in tone as the months pass. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, on pages 1 + 2 it quotes calls by demonstrations demanding “*Schluss mit dem Führungsanspruch der SED – Verfassungsänderung von Artikel 1*”. There is no doubt that this also went hand in hand with the developments within the CDU, which began to position herself for the coming multi-party system.
7. The paper fosters calls for a peaceful transition, fearing violent outbursts of discontent.
8. It fosters a diverse discussion about the pros and cons of unification, allowing both supporters and the opposition to voice their opinions.
9. The paper fosters an internal CDU-party democratization and discussion.
10. It begins to inform the people on the coming market economy.
11. The paper begins to address issues relevant for the successful transformation of the entire society. Examples here include the issue of right wing tendencies in the GDR, something that had not been addressed up till then.

In supporting the liberalisation and democratization processes in these ways, the paper slowly assumed the position attributed to the media in western democracies, namely that of a “fourth estate”, as a watchdog, wanting to make the leadership and their actions more accountable. In the same manner, it became a platform for societal discussion and to an extent attempted to take over an “agenda-setting” function. Having said that, the „Neue Zeit“ should not be seen as a completely independent media actor either. Restrictions mainly continued in a twofold way. Firstly, the paper remained the organ of the CDU. Being such, it faced continued control of the party, and had to support the party in its attempts to position her for the coming elections. Secondly, in theory it was still acting until December

1989 within a totalitarian, one party state, in which the dominance of the SED was constitutionally set. Thus, should the Hardliners have attempted to forcefully reverse the process, the journalists' risked reprisals. Additionally, the state initially still had enough means to censor the media and its workers.

It is important to note, that as the CDU was positioning herself for the coming multi-party system and the elections, the freedom of the "Neue Zeit" was being curtailed. This becomes evident as the newspaper had, following the demise of Honecker and the capacity of the regime to exert power was eroding, initially begun to address issues relatively neutrally. However, as the elections drew closer, at the latest by February 1990, the paper increasingly followed the position of the CDU more strongly. The most prominent example here is surely the issue of unification. The first articles on the subject for negative or neutral becoming positive, neutral and negative by the later part of January; however, by February the articles are only neutral and predominately positive on the matter.

*Neues Deutschland.* Although the "Neues Deutschland" largely stayed the organ of the Central Committee, especially its Hardline fraction, and later remained a newspaper of the SED-PDS, the paper encouraged parts of the reform process. Some of these influences came by accident; others were initiated by reform actors within the SED-media empire. As has already been identified, many journalists within the SED-newspapers, although being communists, nevertheless disliked the form of socialism as existing in the GDR. These saw the possibility ripe to create a truly democratic socialist state. What is interesting is that these journalists initiated articles, which were supported by Hardline journalists and even the Krenz regime, although out of different reasons. The question of uncovering corruption and mismanagement of the past was surely such a topic. Soon after taking over power, Krenz moved out of Wandlitz, and the housing estate became part of the issues the "Neues Deutschland" covered concerning scandals of the past, especially concerning corruption and the misuse of power. Although the strategy of Krenz seemed to have been to portray the new leadership as being reformers, moving out and thus ending the misuse of power, the effect as will be discussed below, for the population was quite the contrary.

Additionally, especially the reform journalists supported the democratization process within the SED. At the same time, once the legitimacy of the old guard was completely gone in the eyes of the majority of the GDR's citizens as well as the grass-root party members, even the hardline journalists began to support calls for a resignation of Krenz as well as for the extra-ordinary party congress of December 1989, which led to drastic changes within the party but also to the elimination of the constitutionally set dominating role of the SED.

As can be seen in the analysis of the content analysis later on, the calls of an extraordinary party congress already began in the first half of November 1989 in the “Neues Deutschland”, and discussions on its results lasted until February 1990. The paper printed daily reports on the preparation, conduction and results of the conference, allowing a broad range of SED-members (including former SED-members who had been forced to leave in disgrace) to voice their opinion. More and more these articles demanded the resignation of the entire old guard, as well as for far reaching democratic changes within the party, but also within society.

At the same time, the paper became a driving force in articulating opposition to unification with the FRG, supporting a call to build up a truly socialist democracy as a left wing alternative to West-Germany. Although the reporting on this was extremely one sided, building on a latently existing fear of many East Germans regarding the consequences of unification, it did nonetheless offer one standpoint in the emerging societal discussion on the pros and cons of unification. The same goes for the issue of compensation of expropriated property.

Additionally, although later than the “Neue Zeit”, the paper began addressing the issue of the right-wing tendencies inside the GDR. Since 1945, the position of the paper followed the stance that this problem merely existed in the FRG, and that basically no Neo-Nazis existed in the socialist German state. As of December 1989, while still pointing to the right wing problems inside West-Germany, the paper also begins to address the problem within the GDR. Again, as this topic became highly relevant for the entire German society, it is rightly addressed by the paper and indeed provides an example of an “Agenda-Setting” attempt.

### **5.1.2 “In between the lines”**

As identified previously, telling the truth and voicing criticism towards the regime or the one party state in the GDR until 1989, required enormous courage and usually brought apprehensive consequences, often bringing an end to the career of the journalist or a loss of access to important resources for the newspaper in which the criticism was voiced. As a result, journalists turned to criticism “in between the lines” when “scratching on the limits imposed” as mentioned above. This promised some security against state reprisals, but even here the journalists could not go too far without fearing punishment. These “in between the line” articles included the diary of Victor Klemperer as identified. But also

during the time of research, such examples could be found. These included the indirect demands for an end to the constitutionally set leading role of the SED, by quoting demands of demonstrators in this respect; such as on November 8<sup>th</sup> on pages 1 + 2, or on November 15<sup>th</sup>, on page 2. Or the article on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, on page 1, in which the paper quotes the “Rudo Pravo”, arguing that the refugee problem also arose out of the existing problems inside the GDR, and that the argument that the FRG was responsible was only half-true. In these examples the paper had not directly taken the word, but had fostered the issue by simply quoting demonstrators or a foreign paper.

A further example of “in between the line” reporting is surely the changing of the ADN release by the “Neue Zeit” on October 11<sup>th</sup>, where the editors were not willing to call the demonstrators “*Randalierer*” or “*aufgeputschte Störer und kriminelle*”, but instead merely informed the readers that according to the state information, the police had been attacked by the demonstrators. As the “Neues Deutschland” had printed the ADN release unchanged on the same day, this sent a very strong signal that the “Neue Zeit” was increasingly willing to oppose the regimes position and to instead bear the truth.

Indeed, as suggested by Vaatz (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008), this “in between the line” reporting became a dominant way of addressing taboo topics, of criticising and of attempting to transmit an alternative message to the one from the regime. This was especially the case for the block party media. Nonetheless, as the grip on power of the regime increasingly collapsed, as the block parties as well as organizations previously controlled by the SED began to assert their independence and to position themselves for a multi-party system, and as the media system were increasingly faced with changing economic realities, the necessity for this “in between the line” criticism no longer existed. The form of censorship –as already described – was a mixture between direct censorship and self-censorship. Initially, as the regime was in retreat, their possibilities and willingness to execute their censorship progressively vanished. This in turn led to the fall of the journalists self-censorship. It is important to note, however, that the change in self-censorship only came once the regime no longer wanted to or could implement its direct censorship, that is once a vacuum had emerged (as argued by Spickermann previously).



### 5.1.3 Outcome

It can therefore so far be established that the output of the media did indeed attempt to foster some form of change within society but also within the individual party. The journalists began to propagandise for their idea of the future. This propaganda attempt was more strongly the case in the “Neues Deutschland” (fostering the position of the SED, later SED-PDS) than in the “Neue Zeit”, but also the “Neue Zeit” did become an instrument of the CDU (especially as of the end of February 1990). Additionally, both media became a platform for opposition groups and views, although in the case of the “Neues Deutschland”, this followed a one sided approach, used in order to propagandise for the SED party as well the agenda of the reform SED members. The media of the block parties, did indeed offer a more diverse political discussion. Critical output of the media before the resignation of Honecker, was extremely limited, but was nevertheless present in the media of the Block parties.

The “output” analysis above has identified different roles the respective media assumed during the transformation process. As described in the chapter “Methodical approach”, however, it is important to investigate whether these issues did in effect have an influence. This as even if the press were beginning to report critically, even becoming a platform for oppositional actors and programmes, it would alone not suffice to argue that the media indeed did have an influence on the democratization process and really assumed an “agenda setting” function.

In this section, the “output” of the media is compared to interviews as well as literature, stating whether and to what extent the “output” of the newspapers were indeed useful for the democratization cause. As different “output” was identified for the block party media in comparison to the SED media, this section is again divided in an analysis of the block party media on the one hand, and the SED Media on the other.

#### *The Block party media.*

As argued by Dr. Zimmermann (Interview Zimmermann, 18.3.2008), the media of the GDR never stood alone. The East-German citizens were constantly informed about developments in the socialist states and within the GDR itself through the West-German media system. Therefore, the possibility of the media inside the GDR to actively influence public perception as well as its possibility of an “Agenda setting” function, must always be seen within this setting.

Nonetheless, as the SED leadership was no longer in the position to exert as much influence and control, subsequently some journalists used the thus resulting time of vacuity as well as perplexity inside the editorial offices, and began to express themselves more freely, to pursue their own interests, to tell the truth as they see it and to propagandise for their idea of the future (Sparks, 2001) – as for a short period of time, there was no one to tell them what to do. The interviews suggest that this development – which drastically increased as of October 1989 - namely the increasingly critical writing of the block party media, as well as increasingly critical stance of the block parties themselves (especially of the LDPD and its leader Manfred Gerlach), largely had a twofold effect.

Firstly, it sent a clear signal to the people. This signal suggested that cracks within the system were appearing, and in turn strengthened the will of the people to demonstrate, sensing that a change was taking place. The fact that the bloc party media, therefore the media of the junior-partners in the government coalition - who were therefore part of the regime - were becoming more critical vis-à-vis the SED sent a clear picture of regime divisions.

Secondly, it largely increased the democratization process within the respective block party. As suggested by Vaatz (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008), the critical reporting of the CDU journalists as well as their demands for change, in effect fostered a change within the CDU itself. Reiprich (Interview Reiprich, 20.5.2008) supports this claim. The content analysis also supports this, as the paper at times printed demands by CDU members, criticising the own party leadership. According to the content analysis the first articles in the “Neue Zeit” addressing the need of reforming the CDU and of setting a new course, already came at the beginning of November 1989, and continued almost weekly until the beginning of March 1990. An example here is an article in the “Neue Zeit”, on January 24<sup>th</sup> 1990 on page 2 headed “Criticism by CDU base”, in which some rank and file CDU members criticise the decision by the CDU leadership to remain in the government of Modrow. And indeed the pressure by the party base to implement an inner-party democratization appears to have had real tangible effects: on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1989, Gerald Götting - seen by the party base as being a “Betonkopf” (Interview Zimmermann, 18.3.2008) - was forced to resign as head of the party. He was followed by Wolfgang Heyl, who then resigned following a coronary, and then Lothar de Maizière in the same month who later came to be the first and last democratically elected Prime Minister of the GDR. Both successors stood for an independent CDU, no longer standing for a socialist system but rather openly promoting a transformation towards a market economy and unification with the FRG.

But the output analysis also identified that the “Neue Zeit” began to discuss the internal problems of the GDR, as well as the former but also continuous corruption and misuse of

power by the SED elites. This fostered a continued erosion of SED's legitimacy and support among the grass root party members but also among ordinary GDR citizens. As remembered by Günter Schabowski (Sieren & Koehne, 1991), increasingly publications began to appear that corruption and mismanagement inside the regime were not yet over, and that the regime was even trying to cover up the corruption of the past. Stated by Schabowski, all this led to a shattering of the party, as the public mood against the party increasingly turned violent. The comrades were not only uncertain, but also intimidated, and left the party in droves. Anger and disappointment of the party members melted with the public frustration and hatred for the regime. As a result the politburo was increasingly cornered. Krenz blamed the media for this situation, and Schabowski for allowing the media the liberties. Schabowski replied that one could not proclaim the media independent and then accuse them of reporting unfavourably towards the regime once they used this independence (Sieren & Koehne, 1991, pg 141).

Already before the resignation of Honecker, although still following the SED-stance, the block party media at the same time, began to address why so many people were leaving, and were beginning to address the problems within the country. This undoubtedly supported a societal discussion on the topic, and to return to the point made before, it suggested to the people that the first cracks were appearing in the system. Additionally, it put pressure on an internal CDU discussion.

Shortly after the resignation of Honecker, the media of the Block parties increasingly began to mention the demonstrations, the emerging opposition groups, their members, their programmes and events. This had an influence in a number of ways.

Firstly articulating the demands of the people and the aims of the opposition groups, it helped to un-demonize the picture the SED-media had attempted to create of these so-called "rioters". As suggested by Vaatz (Interview, Vaatz, 7.5.2008), the SED-media had printed reader's letters, in which these condemned the violent demonstrators and their seemingly undemocratic behaviour. The articles of the block party media, which printed both pros and cons of the demonstrations, on the other hand helped to create a more balanced picture of the situation in the heads of people who were not necessarily opposed to the socialist state as such. With the article dated October 19<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 2, the paper stated that the demonstrators - whom one should attest good faith to begin with - are attempting to bring about change and a public dialog with the regime, the paper does just that. It fostered a societal discussion on the topic, and forced the leadership to acknowledge this discussion. Furthermore, by mentioning the "Neues Forum" before this was actually legally allowed as the content analysis has portrayed, the paper put pressure

(as did the CDU party as such) on the regime to revise the decision not to allow the legalisation of the forum.

Secondly, as stated by Siegfried Reiprich (Interview, 20.5.2008), the fact that the demonstrations as well as the opposition groups and their members were mentioned in the official GDR media, alone was already an enormous victory for these activists. It was the “break through to the official existence”. To the logic of every socialist totalitarian system belonged the circumstance, that opposition to the state and the system inside the country was non-existent. An opposition activist was a *persona non grata*, and as such could not be mentioned by the media. Argued by Reiprich, that these people and groups were then suddenly mentioned in the official media, was a gigantic breakthrough to the official “existence” and symbolised a psychological victory and gain in power for the opposition groups. Additionally, as suggested by Vaatz (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008), the newspaper articles informing on the opposition groups and programmes did indeed help to make these known to the East-German public. Vaatz argues that in this way, “Die Union” in Dresden for example, became a direct point of orientation for the opposition groups. Through “Die Union”, the group 20 that had formed in Dresden could make public their messages. Here a shift in the role of the GDR media as opposed to the West-German media could be observed. So much was suddenly happening all around the GDR, that local newspapers simply had the possibility to write about events and topics that the West-German media could not. In this, as these newspapers had opened and had become more balanced in their reporting, the source of orientation for the people often shifted to these media.

#### *Neues Deutschland.*

As identified, the reaction of the SED newspapers to the unfolding events was to begin a critical reporting on examples of party corruption and misuse of power. One such example, as mentioned above, was the issue of the housing estate of Wandlitz. Although Krenz had supported the critical reporting of the SED-newspapers on the matter, believing this would distance himself to the former leadership, the effect for the population was quite the contrary. In the heads of the people he was part of the old regime (after all he was the person who announced the election results in May), and by allowing the media to portray this example of power abuse he simply increased the hatred towards the old guard including him, among even a vast number of SED rank and file members. Thus, the media played an important role in de-legitimizing Krenz as well as in bringing to light just how corrupt the old elite was.

Although initially, the uncovering of the former scandals only went so far as to mention the obvious and being limited to mistakes of the past, by December 1989, the paper also began uncover issues that the leadership had not wanted, at times directly uncovering scandals of acting SED leaders. Examples included articles suggesting that the leadership had not been entirely open as to the extent of luxury goods available at Wandlitz for the party leadership, or regarding articles concerning the hunting estate of Prime Minister Willi Stoph in Müritz. Stoph, had remained in office (despite directly representing the Honecker leadership circle) until November 7<sup>th</sup>, when he was forced to resign as a consequence of public pressure. The media's coverage of his housing estate undoubtedly intensified public resentment against him, and largely further discredited the old guard in the eyes of the SED's grass roots and the ordinary citizens. Additionally, the paper began to criticise a failing action on part of the new politburo to vigorously stop corruption and misuse and to bring those who committed crimes – no matter who they were – to justice.

As a consequence, the party members increasingly began to demand the resignation of all former leading figures and eventually led to the replacement of Egon Krenz through Gregor Gysi, as favoured by the reform orientated journalists. Additionally, the media began to demand democratization within the party as well as criticising the Krenz regime. Here one strong role of the "Neues Deutschland" becomes apparent, namely its role in fostering the internal transformation (democratization) of the SED during the extraordinary party congress of December 1989, as well as the removal of the entire old guard and the emergence of new, reform orientated leaders. Although the paper did surely not actively initiate a change within the party, its continual reporting on corruption and misuse of power, magnified the already present mistrust of many SED party members as well as the hatred of many ordinary citizens not sure whether to give the new SED leadership the benefit of the doubt. Additionally, by extensively covering the extra-ordinary party conference, the paper offered a wide range of views on how to continue within the party and the state, although the underlining message remained that only the SED could guarantee a successful future for the GDR. The paper increasingly distanced herself from the new politburo. This is strongly suggested by the fact that Schabowski did not manage to overrule the will of the employees of the "Neues Deutschland", in making Spickermann Chief-Editor of the paper. Both Schabowski and Krenz had originally wanted to make the former Deputy-Chief Editor Harald Wessel in charge of the paper, but were forced to back down facing the employees opposition and will to give Spickermann the job.

Considering that a majority of East Germans in 1990, voted for the parties who stood for unification, the attempt by the “Neues Deutschland” to foster for an independent “third way” socialism, however, did not have much effect.

## **V. Hungary**

In Hungary, after Soviet liberalization and occupation a short period of multiparty democracy was replaced by a Stalinist one-party dictatorship in 1948, led by Mátyás Rákosi. The regime of Rákosi was regarded as being one of the most repressive in Eastern Europe, but it ultimately failed in destroying pre-communist democratic experiences and in indoctrinating Stalinist / Leninist principles. The Revolution of 1956, characterized by the participation of all major social groups (students, intellectuals, workers, and rural communities) clearly suggests that the form of communism as implemented by Rákosi was rejected by the majority of Hungarians (Sükösd, 2000, pg 128). In 1956, within a short time, a considerable part of the entire society - including large parts of the press - had organized and begun to demand a neutral, truly democratic Hungary. As suggested by Sharman “By early October 1956 significant sections of the press were critical of the leadership and urged the restoration of Nagy’s *New Course*, while poets and playwrights satirized the old guard and students began to discuss how best to return to the proper path of socialist development” (Sharman, 2003, pg72)

Although Soviet troops ultimately crushed the democratic forces after 13 days, the circumstance of the quick re-emergence of a pluralist political society during the short period, had made it clear to both the Moscow backed Hungarian Communists as well as to Moscow, that the form of repressive Stalinist communism as implemented by the Hungarian regime previously would need to be changed. Consequently, while one-party rule was re-installed and Hungary clearly remained part of the Soviet sphere of influence, the new Hungarian leader, János Kádár, early on began to bring Hungary on the path of “Goulash Communism” (O’Neil, 1997 pg 83), a term used to describe Hungary’s high degree of reformist pragmatism and comparably high liberties given to the people, marked by economic reforms and a greater lenience towards social pluralism.

After two years of harsh repression (1956 to 1958), the regimes policies changed to promote national reconciliation, de-politization, demobilization and cooption of the people (Sükösd, 2000). The regime permanently dissolved the hated and semi-independent Hungarian KGB – the AVH - as well as the Communist guard units, which had been used

to suppress the national uprising in 1956. This sent a clear signal to the Hungarians that the regime had shifted its mechanisms of power from omnipresent terror to softer measures (Sükösd, 2000, pg 133).

Part of this political policy involved far reaching reforms, which brought an increase in especially economical but also social and political liberties. Kádár's new policy was best described by his famous statement "those who are not against us are with us" (O'Neil, 1997 pg 84). This policy was aimed at having a conciliatory effect vis-à-vis a population that overwhelmingly resented the Moscow backed regime installed, by arguing that it was the most liberal in the entire region, and that the Soviet Union would not tolerate more. Subsequently, as stated by Sharman: "Hungary became the happiest barrack in the socialist camp" (Sharman, 2003, pg88). Nonetheless, key demands articulated during the 1956 uprising including Hungarian neutrality, a pluralist political landscape as well as a free press were not introduced. Important to note, was that with this shift also the regime "hardliners" were considerably less extreme and arguably less Stalinist than their GDR counterparts.

People initially appeared to accept the fact that communism was here to stay for a while and that it was indeed the best possible path that would still be tolerated by Moscow. The Journalist András Heltai-Hopp (Interview, 18.2.2008) speaks of a "Kádarian-contentment" which became visible throughout a large part of the Hungarian population. Indeed, Hungary initially fared well in comparison to other countries within the Soviet Bloc, and for many "Goulash communism" was working. Heltai-Hopp suggests that people believed that economically things could only become better, believing in the superior communist system.

The doctrine of "those who are not against us are with us" was largely also used in the handling of intellectuals. Here the regime relied on a so-called "3 T" model *támogatás* (support) *tűrés* (toleration) and *tiltás* (banning), a model that spelt out the essential principles of political neutralization of the intellectuals. The "3 T's" brought a softening of censorship, differentiating between support and toleration of the intellectuals' work. Intellectuals that supported the communist regime were largely "supported", while those which the regime had no use for, but which did also not directly oppose it were "tolerated". Those, which directly opposed the regime or criticised it too directly were "banned". Over the years those works, which had been "banned", increasingly began to move into the section "tolerated", as the general liberalization in society was expanding. This model was also applied for the journalists. As suggested by Zoltan Kiszelly, in the media, this model was applied as a societal pressure valve (Interview Kiszelly, 14.2.2008).

At the beginning Kádár's reforms and the attempt of national reconciliation came cautious and slow, however, in 1963 with a widespread amnesty for participants of the revolution this process received a stark momentum (Sükösd, 2000). The aim was to achieve a general consolidation of the system by including a wide range of social groups and by allowing limited freedoms ultimately fostering demobilization. As described by Lánçzi and O'Neil, in Hungary, beside the so-called official "first" society, an informal, parallel, "second" society of tolerated practices had developed with the aim of creating a vent for social unrest. Dissent, discontent and frustration were channelled into and meant to be diffused by this "second" society (Lánçzi and O'Neil, 1997). Gross (2002) argues that a form of post-communism developed even before 1989, "one that in itself created two political cultures that existed side by side: an official and an unofficial one" (Gross, 2002, pg 14).

Kádár's regime believed in the need of economic reform right from the outset of taking over power. As argued by Batt, it was the central policy of the political strategy of the communist regime (Batt, 1991). It saw reform as a way to strengthen the regime's legitimacy vis-à-vis its population by portraying the communist party as an agent of economic and social modernization and as the provider of an adequate standard of living. The regime abandoned compulsory deliveries of agricultural produce, and even the re-collectivization of the 1960s attempted to persuade the peasants through incentives, instead of forcing them (Stokes, 1993). Due to the reforms introduced, the form of state power that emerged can best be described as a form of "state corporatism" or "consultative authoritarianism" (quoted in Batt, 1991, pg 5). Suggested by Stokes, the government introduced the most far reaching economic reforms of the entire Communist bloc, the most important being the "New Economic Mechanism" (NEM) in 1968 (Stokes, 1993). The NEM presented a structure for the systematic coordination away from bureaucratic state control as well as encouraging the re-emergence of civic citizen orientations (Girogi & Pohorytes, 1994). As a consequence during the 1970s, Hungary appeared to be prospering, and the social contract of "buying" social stability through relative liberties and an acceptable standard of living appeared to work. This largely strengthened the "Kádarian-contentment" as mentioned above. As argued by Rudolf L. Tökes: „Political stability in the Kádár era rested on an unwritten social contract between the people and the regime“ (Tökes, 1997, pg 125).

However, by the 1980s this picture began to change. The central elite had been forced to compromise and modify parts of the NEM by regional party apparatuses over the years,



which in effect partly reversed the reforms introduced previously and subsequently played a part in sliding the Hungarian economy into crisis in 1980 (Batt, 1991). Additionally, Hungary had paid for parts of its economic growth through foreign debts. Between 1970 and 1979 the Hungarian state debt rose from 1 Billion \$ to 9.1 Billion \$. Furthermore, high internal subsidies hindered incentives for competition with international companies. In 1980, Hungary was faced with “massive, unmanageable hard-currency debts, inefficient and outdated production structures, budget deficits and powerful inflationary pressures” (Batt, 1991, pg 7).

In order to tackle these problems, Hungary embarked on a series of far-reaching reforms in the 1980s. These reforms to a great extent “opened” –at least economically - Hungary to the West long before such steps were even contemplated in other communist states. Thus, while other countries facing monetary difficulties, such as Romania, suspended payments and tightened spending, Hungary in 1982 became a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This was the boldest reform of a socialist state as it meant a *de facto* opening to the world market. In 1987 further extensive economic reforms followed again in the sphere of banking, followed in 1988 in areas of taxation, price control, subsidies policy and company law, thus in effect re-creating the possibility to legally form private companies (Swain, 2006, pg 145).

In some respect the economic difficulties, the decision and consequences of bringing Hungary into the IMF and the World Bank, accompanied by an increasingly liberal society since the 1960s, on the whole can be regarded as the beginning of the breakdown of the political system, bringing a post-communist situation, as argued by Gross previously, before the regime actually collapsed. Additionally, the Hungarian regime recognized that further far-reaching reforms had become unavoidable in order to prevent a further erosion of legitimacy and of the economic situation. As argued by Ripp, by the 1980s a new political and economic elite within the regime had taken power, one that realized it had vested interest in implementing radical reforms (Ripp, 2002).

## **1. The Media in Hungary**

As in all soviet satellite states, the Hungarian (communist) workers' party (Magyar Dolgozok Partja – MDP) quickly began to change the conditions of ownership, control, and legal environment of the media. Any publications by the democratic parties were banned, and independent media companies were either nationalized or closed. Control of the

communist party over the media was absolute and characterized by severe censorship. The responsibilities and role of the journalists and the media as such clearly followed the model of Communist states in the region and initially may even have been stricter in comparison.

Following the 1956 revolution, which led to a surprisingly quick re-emergence of societal groups including a pluralist media landscape, the situation changed. With the introduction of Kádár's liberal policies, the degree of media control eased considerably. As suggested by Sükösd (Sükösd, 2000) during the 1960s, although direct censorship remained, the even stronger instrument of media control became self-censorship and the journalists' clientelist dependence on the media *nomenklatura*. As will still be elaborated in the chapter "The Media in transition", the way in which the amnesty of 1963 was introduced, while allowing reform communists to return to important positions within the media, at the same time, the circumstance that many did not receive amnesty worked as a warning and led to a strong system of self-censorship, as the respective journalists knew exactly what would go too far. Indeed, in this "Velvet prison" or "culture of censorship" (Haraszti 1987), self-censorship became a generally accepted and internalized standard among intellectuals, journalists, and authors, (Sükösd, 2000) cemented by the widespread acceptance that the division of Europe would not end soon.

This situation of relative liberalism remained in place until the 1980s, although step-by-step, the individual journalists increasingly widened the scope on what could be written about.

This chapter is comparably shorter than the same chapter on the GDR. This, as the media in Hungary underwent a transition much earlier and remained in a state of transition continuously from the 1960s up to the end of the 1980s. The chapter "The Media in Transition" is thus more elaborate.

As in the GDR, the choice of newspaper for the content analysis of Hungary follows the "most different Systems design" (Przeworski / Teune, 1970). The "Népszabadság" was the direct organ of the party, while the "Magyar Nemzet" was the organ of the "popular front" groups, under leadership of the reform orientated politburo member Imre Pozsgay. It represented the largest reform-orientated newspaper.

It is important to note, however, that the difference in the two newspapers was not as strongly the case as the difference in the two newspapers of the GDR. To begin with, as

will still be outlined, the entire media landscape of Hungary by 1989 was already substantially more pluralistic and independent than was the case in the GDR: owing much to the liberalization measures since the 1960s as well as the media privatizations since 1988 and the thus resulting commercialization. Furthermore, in both newspapers reform communists had considerable influence. In the “Magyar Nemzet”, being the organ of the “popular front” groups, this was the case as it by definition already did not represent the party, and as it was directly under the leadership of the reform orientated politburo member Imre Pozsgay; in the “Népszabadság”, it being the organ of the party, both hardliners and softliners of the politburo could take influence. Nonetheless, the newpapers do represent the “most different” official newspapers with considerable circulation. While hard- and softliners could influence the “Népszabadság”, in the “Magyar Nemzet” hardliners found barely no support, and the paper consisted of both softline regime supporters as well as moderate opposition. The employees of the “Népszabadság” on the other hand, consisted mostly of communists, both hard- and softline. As of the end of 1989, as will be portrayed in the subsequent chapters, this picture changed again. Following the renaming of the communist party, which brought the end of the hardline influences, the “Népszabadság” subsequently was only controlled by reform minded communists. The “Magyar Nemzet”, however, at the latest following the opposition’s referendum of November 1989, increasingly emerged as an independent actor, freeing itself from the direct influence of the party softliners. Consequently, more and more it moved towards becoming a platform for all political forces, bar the hardline communists.

## **2. Towards transition**

As identified previously, by the 1980s, a younger generation of party members had taken over who recognized the need for far-reaching reforms and began working towards implementing these. However, further reforms would inevitably also lead to increasing political and social liberties, which could of course lead to a complete collapse of the communist party’s monopoly on power.

En face of this conundrum, the question of how best to continue became subject to heavy debate among the communist elite, and a conflict between hard- and softliners emerged. Especially from younger members of the party came an increasing demand for change. The party first began to diminish its own grip on political power, when in 1985, it allowed multi-candidate, semi-contested elections. This, as suggested by Swain, had the unintended outcome of weakening the central apparatus and radicalising the provinces,

whose support Károly Grósz, the reform minded „centrist“ party member, needed in his struggle to topple Kádár (Swain, 2006, pg 145). The party's monopoly on political power was first openly challenged by an external group, when in September 1987, Hungarian intellectuals - with some support of communist officials such as Imre Pozsgay - founded the Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokratikus Fórum* or MDF) in Lakitelek. As remembered by Dr. József Kajdi, at the meeting in Lakitelek were present a broad variety of dissidents, from reform communists to real opposition figures as well as dissenters (Interview, Kajdi, 01.04.2008). In January 1988, the MDF began a series of popular public meetings in the Jurta Theatre, on various aspects of democratic reform (Swain, 2006, pg 146).

Initially, following the form of self-censorship as mentioned previously, the media were reluctant to discuss the formation of this Forum (despite the fact leading reform communists had been involved in and present at its formation). Consequently, it was politburo member Imre Pozsgay who opened the way for the press to cover not only their formation but also their agenda and demands. In an Interview for the „Magyar Nemzet“, in November 1987, he openly talked about the meeting at Lakitelek – in which he stated that he participated – and argued that this meeting must not be understood as opposition as such, but rather as an open discussion initiated by some intellectuals who feel responsible for the future of the country. While stating that with some topics raised he could not identify himself with (including with those people who question that socialism as such could solve the problems of the country and its people), he stated that the issues raised are generally relevant issues for the entire society. He argued that during the meeting in Lakitelek, which clearly stood in the spirit of Glasnost, some issues were raised to which the political life was not yet prepared, to which the politicians however need to prepare themselves for (Quoted in: „Budapester Rundschau“, November 25th 1989, page 4).

By quoting the complete wording of the declaration issued at Lakitelek (even the fact that some demanded the abolishment of the socialist system), Pozsgay made the entire objectives of the founding members of the MDF public, henceforth allowing the media to discuss the forum as such.

Additionally, Pozsgay had forced a discussion on the topic among the political elite, thus making a further taboo topic socially and politically acceptable. As remembered by Dr. Kajdi, before 1988, only people, not movements were mentioned by the media. These usually suggested that there were only a few dissidents in Hungary, not that there was an active oppositional movement. Additionally, these were usually published in the police and

crime sections of the papers (such as the popular unrest in March of 1988 which had been organized by opposition groups, but had not been approved by the state and was therefore violently dissolved) (Interview, Dr Kajdi, 01.04.2008).

Argued by Pittaway, the formation of the MDF opened the door to the formation of further organizations that explicitly opposed the party-state (Pittaway, 2003 pg 59). The opposition that emerged comprised various ideological backgrounds and aims (Giorgi & Phorytes, 1994). Especially the MDF can be categorised as being a moderate opposition group, while subsequent groups particularly the "Alliance of Free Democrats" (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, or SZDSZ) and the "Alliance of Young Democrats" (*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége*, or FIDESZ) (see below) were more extrem.

Although the authorities attempted to hinder the emergence of new organizations, the limited efforts and success of this increased the opposition's confidence and independent organizations opposed to the party state mushroomed, and many explicitly began to transform into political parties (Pittaway, 2003). On March 30th 1988 a group of young dissidents at Budapest's Karl Marx University of Economics began a youth organization - FIDESZ - which provided young Hungarians an alternative to the communists youth organization. One of its leaders – Viktor Orban - became famous during a heavily covered speech attacking communist rule during the reburial of Imre Nagy in June 1989 and later went on to becoming Prime Minister. In November 1988, the Network of Free Initiatives transformed itself into the SZDSZ, a party committed to radical liberal policies. The same month saw the re-emergence of the Conservative Smallholders Party (*Független Kisgazdapárt*, or FKGP), the dominant party following the 1945 democratic elections, which had been destroyed by the communists in 1947. Thus, as argued by Samuel Huntington, "In 1988 Hungary began a transition to a multi-party system" (Huntington, 1991, pg 23). The legality of the formation of an explicitly political organization was finally fixed in January 1989, when on January 11<sup>th</sup>, the Hungarian parliament voted to allow freedom of association and freedom of assembly, thus allowing the formation of independent parties and groups.

Much of the room for opposition to form and to voice discontent had come out of the circumstance that the communist elite itself had been facing severe internal splits, which had limited the party's capability to resist the formation of opposition in society. Additionally, an increasing number of especially younger party officials no longer believed in the party's right to prevent opposition voices from arising (Interview, Pach, 14.11.2006). As described by Pach, these developments within the party were perceived by society on

the whole and created a vacuum that could be exploited. As a consequence, as stated by Tökés, “by the end of March 1989, a *de facto* multiparty system came into being” (Tökés 1997, pg 114). And indeed, the regime did little to repress these embryonic political actors (Swain, 2006, pg 146).

The split between hardliners and softliners within the ruling elite became most apparent during the party congress in May 1988 that removed Kádár himself as well as around one third of the Politburo members (Pittaway, 2003). Headlines dominating the newspapers in Hungary following this event, included: “Everything is possible”, “Change and Constancy”, “The Year of Half-Change” (Quoted in Giorgi & Pohoryles, 1994, pg 12).

While the immediate successor of Kádár, Károly Grosz, was not the strongest supporter of reform, the party congress, however, had strengthened the position of the leading reformers including Miklos Nemeth and Imre Pozsgay (Pittaway, 2003). Additionally, the conference that had removed Kádár made a vague commitment to implement a ‘socialist pluralism’ (Swain, 2006, pg 146).

Nonetheless, initially the government proved reluctant to implement any widespread reforms. This began to change in November 1988, when the Central Committee voted for the lifting of censorship as well as the transfer of most party privileges to government, in effect handing power to the softliners who largely controlled government. The concentration of power in the hands of the softliners was further strengthened when Grósz surrendered the premiership to Németh, while Pozsgay successfully submitted to parliament a “democracy package”, which had failed to come through in the politburo in July when fifteen independent MP's had submitted it (although already then it had been drafted by Pozsgay's reform socialist allies) (Swain, 2006, pg 146).

Furthermore, groups within the party began to organize so called “reform circles” – numbering around 100 by May 1989- in order to democratize the party and the political system from below. Statements by party elites suggest that by the end of 1988, these circles had been successful in so far as the leadership of the MSZMP had begun to address the question of ending the leading role of the party as well as preparing for the installation of a quasi-pluralistic political system (Tökés, 1997, pg 115). This was formalised when in February 1989, the party agreed to eliminate the party's leading role in the draft-constitution it was preparing (Stokes, 1993). Following Gorbachev's policies within the Soviet Union, the softliners felt confident that Moscow would not intervene and the hardliners had lost a main argument which they had managed to bring since the

intervention of 1956, namely that the Soviet Union would not permit extensive changes from occurring which questioned the communists grip on power.

Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth and other reform politicians were eager to rapidly force change in early 1989. They believed that a “socialism with a human face” as Nagy in Hungary and Dubček in Czechoslovakia had envisaged it, where the party would retain control in an emerging pluralism, would be the only way to allow the communists to retain power on the long run. As argued by Ripp: “the most favourable solution to them was to start the inevitable political transformation and to ensure that a peaceful and gradual version of this process took place. Therefore, the containment of political radicalism was in the interests both of those in power, who were attempting to save the system and who wished to limit changes to the creation of a ‘new model’, and of those members of the elite who were interested in organized retreat, in avoidance of any violent redistribution of power, and in capitalizing on the favourable conditions during the time of transition towards a new system” (Ripp, 2002, pg 4).

Both the Soviet Leadership as well as the Hungarian politburo saw that a move towards a multiparty system was inevitable. However, in respect to pluralism, both believed that socialism had become so deeply rooted in the societies of the region that a radical transition away from it would not be imminent. Rather they believed that the transition would be gradual, or “Organic” as argued by the Hungarian reformers. Ideally, the transition should take place in form of a “smooth” democratization, which should be both initiated and controlled by the party (Kalmár, 2002, pg 42). As suggested by Bruszt and Stark: “if they could seize the high ground as champions of democracy, the reform Communists calculated that, with their hands no longer tied by the Brezhnev Doctrine, they could use their superior resources, organization, and nationally recognized candidates to defeat the opposition in a straight-ahead electoral contest with no strings attached” (Bruszt & Stark, 1992, pg 43). This view was supported by various commissions established by Moscow in order to evaluate the situation in Eastern Europe and for giving proposals on how to deal with the coming crisis, including the Department of International relations of the CPSU CC and the Bogomolov Institute (Kalmár, 2002).

Nemeth asserted his intend to enter negotiations with the opposition, and in January 1989 Imre Pozsgay formally declared that what had occurred in 1956 had not been a “counter-revolution” as previously declared under Kádár, but instead a “popular uprising against an oligarchic system of power which had humiliated the nation” (Stokes, 1993, pg 100). This conclusion had been part of a report put together by a special party committee – which

Pozsgay had headed - to analyse Hungary's political, economic and social developments during the last 30 years. Pozsgay had announced this before the report had been made public during an interview for a news programme without first consulting the rest of the Politburo (Békés & Kalmár, 2002). Argued by Tökés, this created a political "*fait accompli*", and prevented a looming military putsch by Károly Grosz and a small amount of hardliners in the politburo. With this he had forced the entire party to "confront the central legitimacy dilemma of the Kádár era" (Tökés, 1997, pg 114). Apart from this, what appeared even more remarkable was the fact that Pozsgay also stated that the socialist path "was wrong in its entirety" (Stokes, 1993, pg 100). The politburo –less Grosz – did not want to publicly criticise Pozsgay's remarks, since they partly agreed with him but also feared that this would split the politburo even further in the eyes of the people. A few weeks later when the report was officially released it stated: "Under the Stalin regime the ideal of international communism was turned into a merciless imperial program. In the shadow of this endeavour, Marxist humanism completely vanished". It continued by stating that the system that had been installed through Stalin was built on "bloody dictatorship, bureaucratic centralism, fear and retribution" (Quoted in Stokes, 1993).

As suggested by Kalmár, the remarks made by Pozsgay transformed the matter from a debate on the past, into a debate on the inevitability of a radical change of views for the future (Kalmár, 2002). This also became evident when at the January 31<sup>st</sup> politburo meeting Rezső Nyers unexpectedly stated that, as far as he was concerned, a multi-party system could emerge: "So what we need here is that together with this (that is, the Pozsgay issue-M.K), we should also somehow take the whole problem, the essence of the concrete problem, to the Central Committee, that is, what should we do now with this one-party system (or) multi-party system. Events have overtaken us by now. I do not see any other possibility than to recognize the multi-party system. But let's discuss the issue, and if we decide that we do not want to endorse it, then we don't, and then everyone should decide for themselves, in accordance with their own conscience, whether they can or cannot endorse it politically. I do, to be frank, I'd endorse it, even if you do not agree with it.(....) And someday we will have to do it anyway" (Minutes of the January 31, 1989 MSZMP Politburo meeting. Quoted in Kalmár, 2002, pg 45).

The events at the beginning of 1989 received an own momentum, and it became clear that retaining control would not be as easy for the elite as previously anticipated. As argued by Stokes, more and more the regime was caved in, not only permitting a celebration on March 15<sup>th</sup> (Commemorating the 1848 revolution) but also making it a national holiday instead of November 7 (Commemorating the October revolution), as well as allowing the



reburial of Imre Nagy on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1989 (Stokes, 1993). As suggested by Kalmár, the greater number of elite members recognised that the “wait-and-see” policy was now over (Kalmár, 2002). Consequently, a transition of up to 5 years was envisaged by the politburo, during which a multi-party system would emerge in Hungary, however, under the dominance of the MSZMP. According to Károly Grosz, the first phase of this controlled transition would end in December 1990, at the next scheduled party congress. While some younger party members believed that this phase should end in summer 1990 with the next parliamentary elections, most members believed that the entire transition would at least last until the 1995 general elections. In order to control the subsequent events, the regime had already assigned a number of experts dealing with the problems of the imminent transition. Believing that a pre-negotiated number of seats for the MSZMP during the parliamentary elections - as in the Polish case - would not work in Hungary, the elite saw the importance in negotiating a communist president with far reaching authority, to be elected by the current parliament before the next parliamentary elections took place. The creation of a coalition with some opposition partners as well as the establishment of a communist president should become the central tool with which the party would attempt to retain control despite multi-party elections and thus became a matter of primary importance for the party strategy (Kalmár, 2002).

Grosz was convinced (and threatened) that a break with socialism would bring violence, therefore in the interest of stability the party needed to remain in control and to bring about a coalition under its leadership. Already in February he had stated: “With this structure, with the political burden behind us, and with the mood into which we have been driven and into which we have driven ourselves, will we or will we not be able to command a majority in elections held in a year’s time...? A change of social system in Hungary will be accompanied by a civil war... As I see it, there will be no intervention here from the East or from the West. There will be a closed thermos flask here, in which we will have to suffer for our own response, and then no stone will be left standing here. I am convinced of this, because there is a force that will be able and willing to take arms to prevent a change of system....For this reason, I see it as the only way for the political transition to take place on a basis of agreement between the various forces...It depends on our sense of reality whether we find partners with whom, in a coalition structure, we can create a majority, where the foundations of society remain” (Minutes of MSZMP Political Committee Meeting, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1989, quoted in Rainer, 2002, pg 214).

In June 1989 the government invited representatives of various oppositional movements to participate in the discussions on reforms. The aim, as stated in the position plan prepared

for the February 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> 1989 meeting of the MSZMP Central Committee, was “the discussion of the issues concerning co-operation” (Kalmár, 2002, pg 48). In order to signal that the regime was open for a public dialogue, the government of Nemeth declared that the party would no longer restrict the work of the press.

Present at the “national roundtable” (which in phases in effect lasted from June 13 1989 to March 1990) were representatives of the party, the opposition delegates as well as representatives of various social organizations that had increasingly begun to assert independence vis-à-vis the party. The objective of the regime during the talks was twofold. Firstly, these bilateral negotiations should identify potential coalition partners for the regime. Secondly, it should place the party at the head of the transition process, exposing how unable the opposition would be at this stage to govern alone. As the opposition movements to that point had not been in discussions with each other, and as they all followed various objectives, the government had hoped to de-legitimize the opposition by revealing how badly organized and split these were. However, in order to prevent this from happening, the opposition groups had established a ‘Round table of the opposition’ (EKA) (which lasted from March 22 to June 10, 1989) (Ripp, 2002) prior to the round table discussions with the government in order to create an inner consistency thus strengthening their bargaining status vis-à-vis the regime. (Girorgi & Pohoryles, 1994)

As remembered by Dr. Kajdi, the EKA’s purpose was to ensure the better coordination of the opposition’s co-operation, to create a common platform against those currently in power, and to make the government involve them in consultations concerning important legislation proposals to be submitted to parliament (such as changes related to the Constitution, the position of President of the Republic or the Constitutional court), and other key issues (such as regulations concerning party formations, control over the media, economic issues and questions relating to the upcoming elections) (Interview Dr. Kajdi, 01.04.2008). The opposition had made it clear that it would prevent any attempt by the regime to be split. This became evident when the opposition refused to attend further discussions unless the FIDESZ be allowed to join (Kalmár, 2002).

The strategy of the regime evidently did not work. The opposition initially proved that it was not only organized and willing to unite vis-à-vis the regime, but it also showed its willingness to force about change through mass demonstrations, as they did on March 15<sup>th</sup>. The MSZMP had to recognise that it could not form a coalition before the 1990 elections. Nonetheless, the regime still believed to be firmly in control. They calculated that the outcomes of elections would still be in favour of a dominant MSZMP (between 40-45%

of the vote), and therefore the question of a coalition not pressing. Additionally, the regime still believed that it could negotiate a President to be elected before the free parliamentary elections would take place.

The first phase of the “national roundtable” talks lasted until September 1989, when it appeared that an agreement between the regime and the opposition forces had been reached concerning amendments to the constitution which enabled Hungary’s transition to a multi-party system as well as an electoral law for the pluralistic national assembly. At this point, however, the inherent division in the opposition became apparent as they could not agree on whether direct presidential elections should come before the parliamentary elections –as favoured by the regime – or whether the president should be elected by the new democratically legitimized parliament. The MDF supported the regime, however, the SZDSZ, FIDESZ, the FKGP and the newly founded Social Democratic Party wanted the President to be elected after the elections by a newly elected, democratically legitimized multi-party parliament. Behind this discussion lay several factors: firstly, the question of whether Hungary should be a Parliamentary or rather a Presidential republic. Secondly, the opposition recognized the plans of the regime and saw that should the President be elected beforehand, a representative of the old elite –most possibly Imre Pozsgay – stood good chance of becoming president, thus allowing the party to effectively hold onto power even if the parliamentary elections would not bring a victory for the party. Additionally, as argued by Pittaway (2003), the SZDSZ believed that in order for Hungary to follow the transformation process successfully, a clear break with the past was needed.

Consequently, the SZDSZ together with its allies began collecting signatures to force a referendum on this issue. In order to mobilize mass participation, they cunningly attached this issue to less controversial questions such as banning party activity at the workplace, reallocating party property and banning the Workers guard – the paramilitary party workers organization (Pittaway, 2003). Within a short period of time, 200,000 signatures were collected, double the amount needed to force parliament to call a referendum (Renwick, 2002) and the referendum was held on November 25<sup>th</sup>. Despite a MDF boycott the result was in favour of the opposition.

Apart from inflicting a major blow to the regimes attempt of assuring party control in a new system, the referendum had a major influence on party politics. Prior to the referendum the SZDSZ had been a junior partner in the “opposition roundtable delegation”, the MDF representing the most dominant group. The referendum, however, vastly boosted the SZDSZ’s popularity among the population, even in areas nobody had previously heard

about them. In the perception of many the SZDSZ became the party that stood most strongly for a new beginning. Additionally, it enhanced the MSZMP's erosion of support among the people and destroyed the regimes chances of creating a coalition with the MDF. Not wanting to appear too close with the regime, the MDF was forced to distance itself from it should it want to regain some of the supporters taken by the SZDSZ. Under the leadership of Jozsef Antall, the MDF positioned itself as a party of the moderate centre dedicated to following national values.

The communist elite now recognised that its support in the population was not as strong, that socialism might not be as deeply rooted in society as previously expected. At this point, the regime went a step further from simply promising a multi-party system, as it had first done in February 1989, now also yielding to popular demand that this system did not necessarily need to continue on the basis of a socialist state.

The developments that were occurring increased the deep insecurity within the regime regarding the best future path. Consequently, disagreements between hard –and softliners within the communist party fervently re-surfaced. Increasingly, the reformers recognized the need to distance themselves from the past even more strongly in order to retain or rather regain public legitimacy. The failure to authentically break with the past together with the erosion of the communists grip on power across the entire region, which was now becoming increasingly more evident, resulted in a drastic decline in public support for the party (Pittaway, 2003). As suggested by Lánci and O'Neil: "By the late 1980s the means by which the party had maintained its social support began to turn into its greatest enemy. As changes within Soviet politics became more evident, the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.....found itself at a loss how to respond. It had predicated its rule on the argument that it created a more tolerant form of dictatorship for its subjects in comparison with the rest of the bloc; now developments were making that justification obsolete. As the party stagnated and split into factions, unable to react to events, sectors of society began to press the second society into the first, incrementally expanding the political space for debate within Hungary" (Lánci and O'Neil, 1997, pg 85). The media were surely one of these sectors of society. Sensing that change could now be forced, "the already semi-open media began to pluralize themselves at a dizzying pace, as new papers and journals appeared virtually overnight and as remaining official taboos were cast aside. Even central party and government newspapers soon became identified with party factions, using their relationship to publicize their own views on political reform" (Lánci and O'Neil, 1997, pg 85).

The party rank and file increasingly began to revolt against the conservative wing of the politburo –predominantly against party Secretary General Grósz. This also reflected the general mood in society, which more and more gave the reform leaders within the politburo a strengthened position. In April 1989, Grósz claimed that he had wanted to call a “state of economic emergency” together with Prime Minister Németh, but that he had been voted down by the Central Committee. Németh himself knew nothing of the plan, and subsequently repudiated the claim in the media (Renwick, 2002). This enhanced the open conflict between the hardliners and softliners within the party leadership. At the Political Committee meeting on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1989 and the April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the International, Legal and Public Administration Policy Committee of the Central Committee, the government members present, including Miklós Németh, Gyula Horn and István Horváth, opposed the plans of party hardliners wishing to ban a demonstration during the reburial of Imre Nagy. Instead, they argued for an official rehabilitation of Nagy as well as for all those convicted for the participation in the 1956 uprising, as well as an official government attendance during the reburial (Rainer, 2002, pg 215).

Additionally, Németh replaced six hardline cabinet ministers, and generally began to act more independently in his role as head of the government vis-à-vis the party leadership (Ibid). These actions not only reflected the general mood in the country but also within the party grass-roots. The remarks and subsequent actions by Németh provoked strong independent-minded action from the media: the reform orientated newspaper “*Magyar Nemzet*” adopted a campaigning stance in trying to find out who was telling the truth in relation to the remarks by Grósz (Renwick, 2002, pg 199).

The division between the hard- and softliners ultimately culminated in the transformation of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt* or MSZMP) into the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Part*, or MSZP) in September 1989. While the MSZP was the *de facto* successor party of the old MSZMP insofar as it inherited its assets as well as that its representatives led the government until the elections in 1990, some hardliners re-organized separately as a newly formed Hungarian Communist Workers' Party (*Magyar Kommunista Munkáspárt*).

This transformation, however, was not enough to prevent a further erosion of the regimes popularity. Suggested by Sükösd: “No matter how deeply committed to change ex-Communist leaders declared themselves to be, and no matter how much they publicly expressed regret for some of their earlier actions, voters well remembered their record and their unchanging positions on many critical issues not previously open to public debate

(Sükösd, 2000, pg 144). The split of the MSZMP, together with the emergence of further left and centre-left parties additionally weakened the party, as it led to a process of fragmentation on the left, which would later leave the MSZP isolated during the elections of 1990 (Tökes, 1997).

The regime, increasingly standing with its back to the wall, gave way on an important issue that had been addressed by both the opposition and the media, namely the question of the party's assets. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, the Finance Minister stated that "since 1977 all of the party's real estate has been in state possession, and the MSZMP has held it only with the rights of a trustee" (Quoted in Renwick, 2002, pg 204).

In the winter of 1989 a scandal (which became known as the Danubegate or "*Dunagate*" scandal) (Sükösd, 2000, pg 147) was released by the media, which came to have a devastating effect on the credibility of the entire regime, and especially its reform members. This scandal involved a high-ranking secret service official leaking information to a journalist suggesting that the secret police was still observing the actions of the opposition leaders, and that the party leadership (including Imre Pozsgay) were receiving sensitive information on these, their parties as well as their election strategies. In order to prove these allegations, the official smuggled a journalist and cameraman into the secret police headquarters, where the documents of these actions were shown. Although it was not the "deciding" event which brought the voters away from the MSZP, Dr. Szabó Zoltán, a reform minded MSZP member of parliament since the time (Interview, 19.2.2008), states that it was one factor why the party lost votes and that it enormously damaged the image of the reformers.

Parliamentary elections consisting of a complex electoral system with majoritarian and proportional elements finally took place over two rounds in March and April 1990. As argued by Stokes: "The electoral campaign was open, professional, free, and bitter" (Stokes, 1993, pg 179). The result was a defeat for the left (the MSZP obtaining a mere 8 per cent of Votes), giving the national-Christian centre right a victory. The MDF won 44 per cent of the votes, its leader Jozsef Antall therefore subsequently formed a three party centre-right coalition (consisting of MDF, FKGP and the Christian Democratic People's Party –or KDNP). Needing oppositional support to tackle remaining constitutional issues, the MDF entered an agreement with the largest opposition party the SZDSZ - having obtained 23 per cent – which allowed the SZDSZ candidate, Arpad Gronicz (who had been imprisoned for six years following the 1956 uprising), to become the first President of the new Hungarian parliamentary republic. In return the government coalition gained

parliamentary support from the SZDSZ in strengthening the post of Prime Minister in relation to parliament (Pittaway, 2003).

Regime change in the Hungarian case therefore occurred through “negotiation” between the regime and the opposition groups; a “negotiation” initiated by the softline regime in the hope to retain power in a multi-party system. It began with a split between “Hardliners” and “Softliners”, where the latter managed to secure control. As argued by Giorgi & Pohoryles (1994) the Hungarian regime having perceived the overall dysfunctionality of the system and increasingly coming to recognize the gradual erosion of its power base and legitimation, embarked on political reforms and on further economic reforms already in the mid-1980s. The „liberalization“ phase in Hungary therefore already began early on, receiving a strong impetus at the end of the 1980s. This “liberalization” phase eventually led to “Institutionalization“ of democracy (democratization) phase at the end of 1989. Thus, different to the GDR, in Hungary the transition was a process of political erosion over a long period of time rather than sudden failure.

### **3. The Media in transition**

As already mentioned, the liberalization reforms continuously implemented since the 1960s also had an effect on the extent of political control over the media, which eased considerably. Indeed, as argued by Lanczi and O’Neil, in Hungary following Kádárs reforms, the media were less strictly controlled than elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, allowing broader scope for discourse (O’Neil, 1997). Not only did the amount of direct influence on the media by the party leadership weaken, but increasingly also people who had fallen out due to their involvement in the 1956 uprising were allowed to return to important positions in all parts of society, including media positions. This was part of the general amnesty introduced by the regime in 1963. The people affected by the amnesty can be broken down into four categories:

1. Those on death row. These were not released and the fact that they were awaiting execution suggested just how serious the situation still was. This situation acted as a warning signal and greatly fostered self-censorship.
2. Some leading intellectuals and political figures, although not on death row, remained in prison until the late 1960s. This also sent a clear warning message to those rehabilitated.
3. Some were given amnesty, but were only given low profile jobs such as working in archives. An example of this was Miklos Vasarhelyi, who had been prime minister

Nagy's press secretary. Although periodically he was able to publish some non-political texts, he never again received a high ranking position within the media system.

4. The fourth group of people were repentant communists who received a "second chance" and indeed returned to high-ranking positions.

The form the amnesty worked followed the logic of the so-called "3 T" model as referred to previously. This amnesty had both bad and good side effects. On the one hand, this amnesty strengthened a system of self-censorship in the media. The reason for this was that while the amnesty rehabilitated many intellectuals, at the same time, although introduced as a general amnesty, in reality it was only a partial amnesty working as a general warning what would happen if one went too far. On the other hand, however, it increased a pluralism of ideas present within the media, as party *nomenklatura* responsible for controlling the media system as well as the journalists that returned could attempt to liberalize their respective fields from the inside. Nonetheless, those journalists that could return were clearly picked communists who mostly accepted their guilt in 1956. Therefore, the amount of opposition they were both willing and prepared to pursue, at least at the beginning, remained low. Nevertheless, the majority of these were undoubtedly reform, softline communists and this certainly placed at least part of the control of the Hungarian media system into reform forces within the regime.

Hence, as argued by Sükösd, these rehabilitated intellectuals then positively affected the democratization process by actively disseminating democratic values and concepts and by beginning to address previously taboo topics (Sükösd, 2000, pg 149). An example of this was the former radio journalists Endre Gömöri, who had supported Imre Nagy. Although he was not allowed to return to the radio following the amnesty, he soon became the foreign affairs spokesperson for the liberally orientated newspaper "*Magyarország*". Already in the 1970s, this newspaper began to publish excerpts of western newspaper articles with western standpoints in it, which led to some issues being forbidden in many eastern-bloc countries, including the GDR (Interview, Heltai-Hopp, 18.2.2008).

As a consequence of the high number of reform communists (softliners) in the media *nomenklatura*, as well as the fact that many journalists in top positions by the mid 1960s, had been active in the 1956 uprising, ensured that the official media system enjoyed considerable credibility within the population. As a result in Hungary, comparably to the rest of the region (most notably Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union itself), there existed relatively little *samizdat* literature. Additionally, the media sector as a career option



became open for everyone by the end of the 1960s, as young people interested to enter the media sector no longer had to attend the state journalism schools in order to receive a job in the media. Instead, it became possible for young university graduates to conduct an internship in the radio, the press or TV. Those who were good enough could continue and visit the school of the journalists' association. Of course this was controlled by the regime, but nonetheless it did influence a further opening of the media system (Interview Pach, 14.11.06).

There existed a difference in the extent of liberalization in the press according to the respective genres. While the entertainment media were allowed considerable independence already early on, news or "political" media remained more strongly controlled. These initially –especially concerning Hungarian politics - remained obliged to use the news coverage provided by the central wire service (MTI), in order to prevent non-conformist information from being released. Additionally, there existed several taboos that could not be broken (Sükösd, 2000). The question of the party's dominant position in society could not be addressed, nor the question of whether Soviet forces should remain in Hungary. According to Ferenc Pach, news coverage in one Warsaw pact country about another socialist brother state always had to quote the national news service of that respective country (Interview, Pach, 14.11.2006). As a consequence, as argued by Sükösd: While "cultural media was allowed to become varied and interesting as a result of specific policies intended to coopt intellectuals, academics, and young people in Hungary... Political news coverage was ritualistic, repetitive, dull and extremely boring. Depolitization, alienation, cynicism, and disbelief were the response on the part of the audience" (Sükösd, 2000, pg 131).

However, the extent of control over the political media also became less as the overall liberalization of society continued. In 1976 the liberalization process witnessed a considerable push, even leading to a dual media system, as a growing number of independent sources and channels of communication began to surface (Sükösd, 2000). These opposition sources, which were to an extent tolerated by the regime, in effect broke the communists longstanding communications monopoly (Ibid). This to a degree led to a competition between the illegal and semi-illegal media on the one hand and official media on the other, to an extent forcing the official media to write more objectively and to address more critical topics if they wanted to remain in favour of public opinion. This led to an increase in the extent of media independence, the scope of state censorship becoming increasingly dependent on the size of the publication – the larger the audience it reached the more censorship it witnessed. The form of state-censorship as was the case elsewhere

in Eastern Europe, in Hungary was replaced by a stronger system of self-censorship than had previously already existed, allowing scope for debate (with occasional sanction if a newspaper went too far) (Lánci and O'Neil, 1997). Remembered by Dr. Kajdi, the weakening of political and state powers largely contributed to the loosening of control over the media, resulting in the publication of writings and reports (from the middle of 1989) which were still unconceivable even half a year earlier (Interview, Dr. Kajdi, 01.04.2008).

As a consequence, as suggested by Lánci and O'Neil: "in Hungary, the official media themselves developed into a central institution for political debate, allowing for the semi-open discussion of sensitive topics" (Lánci and O'Neil, 1997, pg 84).

Subsequently, the second society increasingly entered and interacted with the first. As argued by the Hungarian sociologists Elemér Hankiss: "In a strange way, the second public sphere invaded the first. People, trespassing on the grounds of the first public sphere and symbolically expanding their freedom, openly discussed important issues, criticized the regime and attacked sacrosanct taboos; but they did all this in an allegorical and allusive language, the use and understanding of which became a societal game and a highly refined art. Everybody took part in this nation-wide connivance, the members of the ruling elite included. They swooped down only when allusions became too abusive or touched upon spots that were too sensitive" (Quoted in Lánci and O'Neil, 1997, pg 84).

Although many Hungarian journalists often supported the ideals of communism, many at the same time believed in the need of political, social and economical reform. Some followed the stance of the reform leaders within the politburo who imagined a more "humane" form of socialism; while not wanting to do away with the ideals of communism, nevertheless permitting a free and truly democratic society. This influenced them in addressing sometimes long overdue discussions on political reform and thus initiating a debate both within society but also among the party elite.

Additionally, as the interviews suggest, the party *nomeklatura* responsible for the media were also predominately in the hands of reform communists. As liberalization in the political sphere increased and as the fight between the hard- and softliners created some sort of vacuity, the large number of reform orientated communists who re-entered the decision making level of both the party and the media as a result of the amnesty in the 1960s, increasingly began to pursue their agendas more strongly and to expand the topics that they could write on. As remembered by András Heltai-Hopp, the situation for many journalists to write more freely was strengthened by that fact that by the 1980s, the

majority of the members of the Agitation and Propaganda department were not hardline communists, but instead young reform orientated communists. This was especially the case in those responsible for economic questions in the media, but also visible throughout the entire apparatus.

A key factor in enabling the “Magyar Nemzet” to cover previous taboo topics, clearly lay in the person of Imre Pozsgay. As has already been addressed, it was his remarks on the radio that set a political *fait accompli* regarding the politburo stance on the events of 1956. Additionally, in his role as the leader of the Popular front groups, the “Magyar Nemzet” was under his control. As remembered by Dr. Zoltan Szabó, leader of one of the most radical orientated party reform circles in 1989 (the Budapest reform circle), Imre Pozsgay explicitly instructed the newspaper editors to write about the reforms as much as they could and break on taboo topics. Additionally, he allowed the newspaper to become the mouthpiece of the Budapest reform circle. Beginning in summer of 1989, every Wednesday, the reform circle members would meet with the newspaper editors. In these meetings the editors were told what the circle was discussing and what they thought was important to be made public. In the Thursday issue of the newspaper these points were then published. Imre Pozsgay was one of the main leaders of the communist reform wing, and initially held widespread authority over the reform movement. Being in charge of the “Magyar Nemzet” he was able to „direct“ a comparably big newspaper, and in addition he exerted a strong influence (due to his personal authority) over many further journalists working for other papers.

Thus by the end of the 1980s, journalists were in a relatively safe position to write critically. Firstly, the *nomenklatura* of the newspapers as well as the members of the Agitation and Propaganda department of the party were overwhelmingly reform orientated allowing the journalists to write more critically. Secondly, high-ranking party functionaries including politburo members were actively instructing the media to take a more critical stance. As a result, the journalists felt protected vis-à-vis hardline party elites. Thus, the increasingly liberalized atmosphere for the media employees partly came as a result of division within the regime, whereby the increasingly stronger softline wing of the party instructed the media to support the unfolding liberalization process.

It is important to note that, according to the interview findings, this liberalization of the media as well as the direct instructions of the softline fraction to begin a more critical reporting, did not “create” critical journalists. Instead, it strengthened those journalists representing the softline party members or moderate opposition, who had always wanted

to begin a more balanced, critical reporting, but who had been restrained by the existing power status quo, fearing negative consequences. Moreover, as the softline regime leadership was increasingly sidelining the power of the hardliners, the hardline journalists found it increasingly difficult to have their voices heard.

The reform movement within the regime at the beginning was rather homogenous, but by 1989 the movement was dividing along a social democratic direction on the one hand, and a popular „folkish“ direction on the other. Imre Pozsgay, clearly supported the latter movement, and as this was not the stance of the majority of journalists and of the reform movement as such, by the later half of 1989 he to a great deal had lost his authority. Thus, as suggested by Dr. Zoltán Szabó (Interview Szabó, 19.2.2008), he lost most part of his authority to „direct“ the media by the end of 1989. This came as the general position of the party also increasingly weakened, as events such as the referendum initiated by the opposition or the *Dunagate* scandal further discredited also the reform forces. The interview findings as well as content analysis suggest that, while Imre Pozsgay wanted to influence the media to report in a „folkish“ direction, as well as to dictate on which opposition group to concentrate on most (which in this case was the MDF which Imre Pozsgay supported from the very beginning), by the end of 1989 the journalists would no longer listen. Thus, it is at this point, that the initial liberalization - which had been directly fostered by Imre Pozsgay and other party reformers - led to the media detaching themselves even from the direction of the reform communists, which up to then had always guaranteed their protection vis-à-vis party hardliners. The liberalization introduced had increasingly widened the limits of what was possible, and increasingly more, the media were no longer dependent on the regime for their survival. As will be identified in the succeeding chapter, the privatization of the media system greatly amplified this process.

Thus, as stated by Dr. Zoltán Szabó (Interview Szabó, 19.2.2008), by then the media had visibly become more pluralistic, increasingly asserting their position as an independent actor. Indeed, the interviews suggest that the media no longer simply wanted to merely document or bear witness to the changes occurring, or to print critical articles supported by the softliners, but instead wanted to actively „tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future“. This certainly came from a general erosion of party authority, which largely created a political „vacuum“. As argued by Dr. József Kajdi, the media workers felt that they had become „masterless“ and uncontrolled, therefore they „bravely“ entered into the realm of politics, sympathized with certain opposition organizations and their leading politicians, and the media began taking on a opposition role, supporting the development and popularity of opposition movements and

organizations. Consequently, by the end of 1989 the opposition groups were mentioned as often in the public media as was the MSZP (Interview Dr. Kajdi, 01.04.2008) (the legal successor of the MSZMP, which dissolved itself in the autumn of 1989)

As has been identified previously, by 1988 the media increasingly began to cover the opposition; its formations, programmes and people. Remembered by Dr. Kajdi, several factors and events gradually influenced the journalists in writing about the opposition groups and in supporting them. These included the formation of the opposition groups (particularly the MDF, the SDSZ, FIDESZ), the formation of the Opposition round table, the support by some politburo members and their comments (especially regarding these formations as well as previously taboo topics), as well as the weakening of political and state powers of the communist party which increasingly became obvious. This resulted „in the publication of writings and reports (from the middle of 1989) which could have been inconceivable even a half year before” (Interview, Dr. Kajdi, 01.04.2008).

The remarks by the regime elites regarding the prospects of further liberalization measures, the open support of some regime members vis-à-vis the emerging opposition groups, as well as the decision to enter round table negotiations at the middle of 1989, all signalled to the entire society that the regime was willing to enter a “negotiated change” and that a multi-party system would inevitably come. The interviews for this dissertation suggest that this retreat of the regime that became increasingly more evident, was one major factor in bringing the journalists to begin an ever more critical stance and to progressively more strongly begin to break on previous taboos. As remembered by Dr. Kajdi: “After it was made public that the state party in power sat down to negotiate with the EKA (the oppositional round table sdw), the official media entered into a news-race on reporting about EKA meetings, political declaration of the organizations and key figures of the EKA, and the National Round Table meetings....from that time almost the whole media became a participant and supporter of democratic transition” (Interview, Dr. Kajdi, 01.04.2008).

As the party rank-and-file increasingly sidelined the conservative wing of the communist party, headed by the party Chairman Károly Grosz, this also came to have a strong effect on the position of Grosz to dominate the party institutions including the party organ “Népszabadság”. As already identified, many of the journalists who were indeed communists, nonetheless represented the reform fraction. Grosz could make sure that the *nomenklatura* of the “Népszabadság” was more hardline than in the “Magyar Nemzet”, but as the events were unfolding in 1989, he found it increasingly more difficult to control the

paper. This as some of the leading *nomenklatura* of the paper did indeed support reform initiatives and this coincided with a time of vacuity, when the hardline fraction inside the party were simply too distracted to dictate and control what was happening in the paper. Thus it is fair to say, that while in the case of the GDR the official party organ the “Neues Deutschland” remained in the hands of the inner politburo leadership around Honecker, in Hungary this was not the case. Instead, different groups within the regime leadership - hardline and softline - influenced the paper. Additionally, faced with a party split between hardliners and softliners, the hardliners who were increasingly marginalised could simply no longer execute disciplinary measures against rebellious journalists. This was reinforced by the decision in November 1988 (as mentioned previously) to strengthen the powers of the government vis-à-vis the politburo. The breaking away of the paper from the control of Grosz was finalised, when in December 1989 the party renamed itself into the MSZP, and the hardline fraction under Grosz formed a new communist party. As the MSZP was the legal successor party of the MSZMP, the paper became the organ of this reformed socialist party. The possibility to dictate the direction of the paper was, however, further curtailed when at the end of 1989 40% of the papers were sold to the German publishing group Bertelsmann AG. This not only led to commercial interest further dictating the “output” of the paper (see below), but the MSZP could no longer decide on staff decisions and direction alone.

#### **4. The influence of media privatization**

The process of privatization of the print media beginning already in 1988 –bringing the involvement of mostly Western European publishers - was a strong impetus on the path of media liberalization. Consequently, as stated by Láncki and O’Neil, still under a one-party state, before free elections took place, the Hungarian media landscape became the most highly privatized in the region, with the greatest amount of foreign capital (Láncki and O’Neil, 1997, pg 86). Additionally, as the regime - by allowing privatization of the media - decided that newspaper publishing was a commercial activity that could thus not be controlled by the regime, at the same time, it dissolved its department for agitation and propaganda. This further eliminated the party’s control capability over the media (Jakubowicz, 1995).

As suggested by the interviews for this dissertation, the process of privatization positively affected transition by allowing the journalists to engage in political debate even more openly. Additionally, as remembered by András Heltai-Hopp, it in many respects not only

allowed them to do so, but rather also forced the entire media system to write more openly due to a growing commercialization (Interview Heltai-Hopp, 18.2.2008). This process had three influences on media liberalization:

Firstly, it to an extent freed the journalists, as they no longer had to fear as strongly being sacked if they reported critically on the regime. It largely strengthened the “safe” position of the journalists as identified above, and boosted the already present “green light” from reform communist leaders to begin a more critical reporting.

Secondly, sensing that transition might be imminent, the journalists did not want to appear too pro-regime, fearing later anti-communist reprisals by the new state leadership. Therefore, also those journalists who were not working for one of those newspapers that were privatized in 1988, still had reason to break free from abiding too closely to the party line. As argued by Zoltan Kiszelly, the media institutions and journalists alike wanted to have a good standing with all parties, as they did know which party would emerge as dominant force following the next elections (Interview, Kiszelly, 14.2.2008).

Thirdly, as remembered by Heltai-Hopp, the initial euphoria of the sudden increase in the journalistic freedoms that privatization brought (influencing them to “free toe express themselves, pursue their own interests, to tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future” (Sparks, 2001, pg 22)), vanished as the journalists realized that they had to follow a market reality, which increasingly gave priority to business interests. As sated by Dr. Zoltán Szabó, in a market economy, the media had to begin a commercial thinking of writing what sells (Interview, Szabó, 19.2.2008). As a result, the fact that the newspapers had to make money to survive, strongly influenced the topic selection of the various media, increasingly moving in the direction of a media “boulvardization” (Interview, Heltai-Hopp, 18.2.2008). As remembered by Dr. Szabó, this amplified the drive of the respective media to uncover political “scandals” of both the past and the present, believing that these would multiply their sales (Interview, Szabó, 19.2.2008).

Nevertheless, the situation was not without risk for the journalists. One should not forget that in 1988, the tide of change across Central and Eastern Europe had not yet been clearly cemented; Hungary was still a one party state, and the state still had considerable power to act against the independence of the media. The state could also decide to undo the privatization (especially the spontaneous privatization) that had occurred. Additionally, even if change was imminent, the possibility that the old leadership would manage to retain considerable power in a new system (most probably through a strong president)

appeared possible. Thus, the journalists, although sensing that change might be imminent, still jeopardised their own existential position. Suggested by Bajomi-Lázár, by questioning the hegemony of the party the journalists risked their jobs, their incomes as well as a number of further privileges including that of easy access to information (Bajomi-Lázár, 2001, pg 188). That the situation could still be turned around was made clear, when in March 1990, the Soviet Army conducted manoeuvres in Hungary. The fact that these coincided with the elections, for many acted as a warning that the process should not go too far. The MDF (Magyar Nemzet, 7.2.1990, pg 3) heavily criticised that these manoeuvres were being held during the elections as well as during a time when the continued presence of Soviet troops was subject of public discontent.

Nonetheless, the economic reforms of 1988, regarding privatization and foreign investment had a paramount influence on the media's room for autonomous work, as it further eliminated the party's room to directly influence the media output. The reforms created a basis for the creation of private companies in Hungary, and as the reforms were flexible, they created a situation where spontaneous privatization occurred (Giorgi & Pohoryles, 1994).

This dissertation had previously argued that new economic realities limited the freedom of the press while the old system was still in place. This appears to hold true for Hungary. In that, as suggested by the interviews, the media output began to be dominated by market orientated thinking, which became one driving force especially in uncovering political scandals, leading to stronger investigative journalism.

According to Frydman spontaneous privatization had been "the predominant means of privatization in Hungary to date" (quoted in Giorgi & Pohoryles, 1994, pg 16). The term 'spontaneous privatization', involving a huge influx of western capital, with reference to Hungary has a double meaning: firstly, it refers to the process of a 'partial transformation' of companies, usually but not only linked with the acquiring of a new owner. Secondly, it is used in a wider process of enterprise-initiated transformation or privatization. These transactions of spontaneous privatization took place with practically no state regulation. It was the source of considerable debate regarding the balance of decision-making power between top and lower level employees and about the role of the state in maintaining control over the whole process of economic transformation (Giorgi & Pohoryles, 2004). The media was heavily affected by this form of privatization, where a vast amount of foreign money was invested in the print market.



The process of privatization, however, was not limited to “spontaneous privatization”. Rather, it was also actively implemented by the government. As remembered by one journalist working at that time, the process of privatization occurred in three distinct ways:

Firstly, the majority of state owned newspapers (which represented the greatest bulk) were partly sold to western investors (initially the state retaining more than 50 %, but this became less and less as the months proceeded).

Secondly, the government sold off 4 of its newspapers.

Thirdly, some of the newspapers that belonged to the state witnessed a spontaneous buy out of the management, which created an own publishing house that owned the respective newspaper.

The reasons for the privatization of the media remain subject of debate. Until this day, the opposition claim that the privatization occurred in order to enable the communists to retain power over the media once a democratically elected government would take over. Argued by FIDESZ Member of Parliament, Dr. Tamás Deutsch-Für (Interview, 15.2.2008), in selling off the media the communist elite pursued a twofold objective:

Firstly, they sold off the respective media to foreign owners but kept the bulk of the money that was paid, thus retaining economic power in the new system.

Secondly, the regime sold the media under the condition that the bulk of the communist journalists remain in their position for a time period of up to 10-15 years, thus in effect, retaining influence over the media.

Although this argument may hold some truth, especially in respect to the financial part, the argument does not appear entirely convincing. By 1989 the economic situation of the party state was in a critical condition. The financial burden of running this vast media empire that belonged to the state as well as the government was indeed crippling. Moreover, it does not appear entirely convincing that the companies that were investing would be prepared to engage in such a contract concerning employee status over such a long period of time. As this contract was not officially agreed, who would make sure that the investors held their word once the democratic system was installed? Additionally, the opposition forces were questioning the ownership structure of social organizations under party control, which the government admitted in the late 1980s belonged to the state and had since the communist takeover of power merely been administered by the party in the role as trustee. With the re-naming and re-formation of the communist party in October 1989, the questioned ownership structure became even more apparent. Thus, it appears that the

selling of the media occurred mainly as the state was simply no longer able to pay for this media empire which up to then never had to cover its costs, and in order to regulate the ownership question.

It is true, however, that the majority of media employees present until lately, were employees present already before 1989. In the case of employee takeovers of companies, the reason for this is self-apparent. In the case of the media that were bought by foreign investors this is, nonetheless, not explained solely on the grounds of an agreement by the former regime and the investors. Instead, as suggested by the interviews for this dissertation, these investors bought companies that had a working employee structure, which meant that from the receptionist to cleaners to journalists, a well-rehearsed team already existed. Although some people existed to fill the posts, it would have been hard to find sufficient people qualified to take over everything immediately. Even if people were to be found, the costs of training would have come on top on the investments to be made. Out of this reason a strange cooperation between the former employees (also if they were socialists) and the new owners emerged. This was not only the case for Hungary, but also for the East-German media landscape, where as previously identified, while the Chief-Editors were often replaced with West German people, the rest of the staff often remained the children of the old system.

As to the newspapers of analysis, the “Népszabadság” underwent a partial sale in 1989, when 40 % of it was sold by the MSZP to the German conglomerate “*Bertelsmann AG*”. It retained influence over the paper by transferring the rest into a MSZP foundation “*Szabad Sajtó*”. Today this foundation still holds 27% of the paper, the rest now belonging to the Swiss publishing house “*Ringier*”. The “*Magyar Nemzet*” was the only major daily which had not privatized itself at least partially before the parliamentary elections of March 1990. In 1990 the new government blocked attempts by the editorial staff to sell it to the Swedish daily “*Dagens Nyheter*”, instead selling it to the French publisher “*Hersant*”, who was viewed by the government as being more conservative (O’Neil, 1997).

To conclude on this topic therefore, media liberalization was initiated by government reforms, supported by the active instruction by softline regime members to begin a more critical reporting (and thus from a split within the regime leadership). The privatization measures occurring since the 1960s greatly boosted this process, leading to a commercialized environment and further eroding the possibility of the regime to influence the media output.

## **5. Comparing the respective Hungarian newspapers of research**

The research for this dissertation clearly suggests that the conclusion of Lánci and O'Neil (Lánci and O'Neil, 1997, pg 84) namely that "in Hungary, the official media themselves developed into a central institution for political debate, allowing for the semi-open discussion of sensitive topics", had already come by 1989. As argued by Dr. Kajdi (Interview Kajdi, 01.04.2008), the first breakthrough where the media reported on opposition to the regime and above all on the formation of oppositional groups and party's directly, came in March/April 1988 with the formation of the FIDESZ. This evolving critical stance of the media towards the regime then became considerably more strongly in tone towards the end of the analysis. Also remembered by Dr. Kajdi, the real breakthrough took place in the spring of 1989 when the movements, organizations and parties established (or sometimes re-established) began the Opposition round table (EKA) with the purpose of ensuring a better coordination of their co-operation.

While at the beginning of January 1989 the media (in the case of the analysis both respective newspapers but especially the Magyar Nemzet) appeared to follow or at least cover the initiatives of the reform orientated Regime members, by December 1989 / January 1990, the media appeared to have additionally broken free of the influences of these reform elites and began to act more strongly as an independent actor in the developing process.

Furthermore, the split of the party, which culminated in the re-naming of the party into the MDZP together with the formation of a separate "Hardline" communist party in December 1989, in addition to a widespread de-legitimation of the regime in general in the public's perception, fostered the increasing independence of the media vis-à-vis the regime. Thus, it is fair to say that while the reform regime actors – particularly the group around Imre Pozsgay – initiated the liberalization process in the media, by the end of 1989 already, these had lost considerable control and the media began to assert its independence. This also appears to be confirmed by the content analysis findings.

Both newspapers of analysis were the organs of two different groups within the ruling elite. On the one hand the "Népszabadság", the official organ of the party, between May 1988 until the renaming of the party into the MSZP in September 1989, strongly influenced by the Hardline-leader Károly Grosz. Although the reform forces within the party could influence the paper already before September 1989 (partly because the nomenklatura

within the party responsible for the media and the media nomenklatura themselves as well as the government leadership were reform orientated), the end of the control of Grosz in the party in December finally ended any direct influence he could still take on the paper.

On the other hand the “Magyar Nemzet”, officially the organ of the popular front groups, and therefore directly under the control of the reform minded politburo member Imre Pozsgay, in his position as the leader of the popular front groups. The fact that it was he who initiated a public discussion on the events of 1956 already in January 1989, together with his public support for the formation of the MDF already in 1987, put a radical reformer in charge of one of the biggest Hungarian newspapers. This gave the paper and especially reform-orientated journalists enormous liberties to begin a critical reporting, even more so as Pozsgay had directly instructed them to do so.

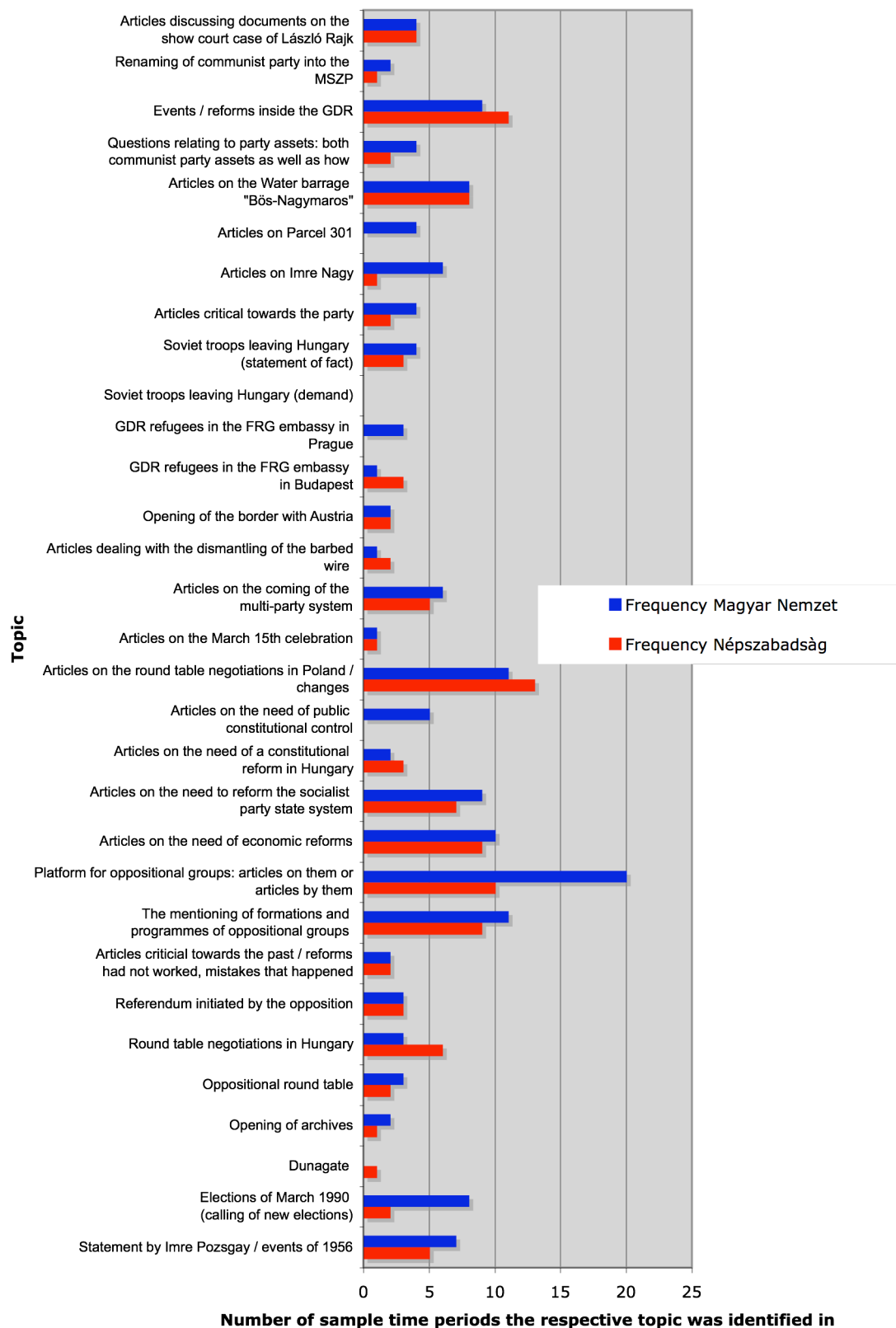
As in the corresponding chapter on the GDR, this chapter will begin by portraying the results of the quantitative analysis, as described in the chapter “Content analysis design”. It portrays which topics were identified by the key word search as topics being discussed by the respective newspapers during which time of the research period. In a second stage, the qualitative findings (which represent a greater focus in comparison to the quantitative analysis) will be presented.

### **5.1.1 Quantitative analysis**

As already stated, the research time (May 1989 until March 1990) was divided into half-months (15-16 day time frame). For the recording of the quantitative analysis, it was important that the respective paper covered the topic (as selected and identified in the chapter “Content analysis design”) at all within the given 15-16-day time frame (either as an own article / commentary or by a foreign source). Thus, even if only one small article was printed, this was recorded. The recording was made through an “x” for the respective newspaper in the particular timeframe; a red “X” indicating that the respective topic was covered by the “Népszabadság”, a blue “X” indicating that it was covered by the “Magyar Nemzet”. This went for the random weekly sample search (always Wednesdays), as well as for those topics, where daily samples were taken during case varying time periods (as described in the chapter “Content analysis design”). The recordings therefore do not suggest the frequency of the respective topics within each sample 15-16 day time period. N.B. the recordings only show topics that occurred following the predefined words and phrases: thus, certain further dominant topics existed; however, these were not recorded, as they did not match the predefined words set. No importance was given to length or prominence in the quantitative analysis, as this was then done in the qualitative part.

### **5.1.2 Quantitative analysis findings**

The recordings of the pre-selected topics of the quantitative content analysis for the “Népszabadság” and the “Magyar Nemzet” as identified during the keyword sample search can be found in Appendix 2. Below, a comparison between the findings in form of a bar graph can be found. This bar graph directly compares the number of times each specific topic was identified during a half-month sample time frame.



### 5.1.3 Quantitative analysis comparisons

The quantitative analysis suggests that many critical topics were already being addressed by both newspapers early on during the time of analysis. The findings of the interviews as well as the background research seem to be confirmed, namely that the media in Hungary by 1989 was by far more independent and critical –at least insofar as to the diversity of critical topics addressed – than their GDR counterparts during the same early period. Thus, the media in Hungary already early on began to discuss issues important for the imminent transition.

As to the statement of Imre Pozsgay on the events of 1956, both papers cover the issue during the second half of January and the first half of February 1989. Thereafter, it remains a topic irregularly in both papers until the last articles on the topic this content analysis found: namely, during the second half of August 1989 in the “Magyar Nemzet” and during the second half of November 1989 in the “Népszabadság”. Overall, in the former the topic was identified during seven sample time periods, while in the latter it was identified during five sample time periods.

With regard to the first special attention focus question on the political scandals of the past and the present - namely the “Dunagate” scandal - this content analysis found no reference in the “Magyar Nemzet”; in the “Népszabadság” it was referred to during the second half of January 1990. As to the second special attention focus question, namely the opening of the archives, the analysis found that in the “Népszabadság” it was referred to during the second half of November 1989 and in the “Magyar Nemzet” it found references during the second half of December 1989 and the first half of January 1990.

As to the Hungarian round table negotiations, both papers begin reporting on this issue during the second half of May 1989. The issue remains an issue irregularly until the second half of November in the “Magyar Nemzet” and the first half of December in the “Népszabadság”. Overall, the topic is covered by the former during three sample time periods and during six in the latter. As to the oppositional round table, the first article identified was during the second half of May 1989 in the “Népszabadság”, and during the first half of June in the “Magyar Nemzet”. Overall, the issue received attention during two sample time periods (namely during the second half of May and during the second half of August 1989 and ) in the former, and in three sample time periods (namely during the first and second halves of June and during the first half of August 1989) in the latter.

With regard to the referendum initiated by the opposition, both papers continuously report on the issue from the second half of October until the second half of November 1989.

Interesting to observe was that neither newspapers printed articles demanding that Soviet troops leave Hungary. All were matter of fact articles. As will be discussed later, the only negative article in this direction came in the “Magyar Nemzet” in 1990, when it criticised that the Soviet army was conducting military manoeuvres in Hungary during the elections.

The picture of the media landscape in Hungary at prima facie therefore suggests that both the “Népszabadság” and the “Magyar Nemzet” fostered critical discourse and that both assumed an agenda setting role. Both addressed the issue of the need of a constitutional reform quite early, as well as the need to reform the socialist one party state as such (in both instances the “Népszabadság” did so even before the “Magyar Nemzet”). Both wrote on the necessity of economic reform from the very beginning of the time of research (the “Népszabadság” wrote on the issue during nine sample time periods, the “Magyar Nemzet” during ten). Additionally, both also covered the issue of the coming multi-party system early on. The “Népszabadság” covered the issue from the second half of January 1989 during five sample time periods until the second half of August 1989. The “Magyar Nemzet” did so from the second half of February 1989 during six sample time periods until the first half of February 1990. In both papers the round table negotiations and reforms in Poland were extensively covered as of the first half of February 1989. In the “Népszabadság” the topic of Poland is covered during thirteen sample time periods until the first half of September 1989. In the “Magyar Nemzet” this analysis found articles during eleven sample time periods until the first half of February 1990. In the former the events in the GDR is covered during eleven sample times periods from the second half of September 1989 until the second half of March 1990. In the latter the issue is covered during nine sample time periods, from the second half of March 1989 until the second half of February 1990.

Nonetheless, significant differences between the two newspapers do exist. While both papers write on the need of a constitutional reform in Hungary, this content analysis found that only the “Magyar Nemzet” wrote on the need of public constitutional control (during five sample time periods from the first half of March 1989 until the first half of February 1989.) Additionally, while on the one hand both papers mention the formation of oppositional groups and parties: during eleven sample time periods from the second half of February 1989 until the second half of January 1990 in the case of the “Magyar Nemzet”; and during nine sample time periods from the first half of March until the first half of



December 1989 in the “Népszabadság”. On the other hand, however, these very groups and parties receive a greater platform (and significantly earlier) in the former than in the latter. In the “Magyar Nemzet” these receive a platform from the first half of February 1989 (increasing with intensity during and after the referendum) for twenty sample time periods until the second half of March 1990. In the “Népszabadság” these only receive a platform for ten sample time periods from the second half of August 1989 until the second half of March 1990 (therefore to the time when the hardliners within the party were largely discredited and had lost most of their authority, and shortly before the renaming of the party when these then had lost all remaining positions).

Additionally, a dominant differing topic appears to be the mentioning of “Parcel 301”. While the “Magyar Nemzet” prints first articles on it as early as the second half of February 1989 for four sample time periods until the second half of August, the “Népszabadság” does not mention it at all. As to direct references to Imre Nagy, in the “Magyar Nemzet” these could be identified during six sample time periods from the second half of February 1989 until the second half of June. In the “Népszabadság” direct reference could only be identified during one sample time period, namely during the second half of May 1989 (hence shortly before his reburial).

Furthermore, the first critical articles directed at the party begin as of the first half of February 1989 in the “Magyar Nemzet”; in the “Népszabadság” the first articles in this direction could be identified as of the first half of May 1989. Overall, the former reports on this issue during four sample time periods, the last being during the second half of December 1989; while the latter reports on this issue during two sample issues, the last during the second half of July 1989.

As to the issue of party assets, the first articles in the “Magyar Nemzet” were identified as of the first half of November 1989, while it was only addressed in the “Népszabadság” as of the first half of January 1990, according to the content analysis.

The show trial of László Rajk is not found in the “Népszabadság”, while it is continuously addressed as of the first half of February until the second half of March 1989 in the “Magyar Nemzet”.

Both papers begin reporting on the water barrage project “Bös-Nagymaros”, however, significantly earlier in the “Magyar Nemzet”. The “Magyar Nemzet” addresses the issue as of the first half of March 1989, during eight sample time periods until the second half of

November. In the “Népszabadság” this analysis found the first article on the issue during the first half of May 1989, and the last also eight sample time periods later during the second half of December.

These all suggest that the “Magyar Nemzet” was more critical (or at least earlier so) on important issues than was the “Népszabadság”. The only dominant exception to this, were critical articles towards the past and the question of failed reforms in the past. Here, the first such articles could be found as of the first half of December 1989 in the former, but already during the second half of February 1989 in the latter.

Concerning the election of March 1990, the “Magyar Nemzet” appears to cover the elections more often than does the “Népszabadság”. In the “Magyar Nemzet” the first reporting on the topic was identified during the second half of October 1989, for eight sample time periods until the second half of March 1989; in the “Népszabadság” the issue is only addressed during two sample time period, namely during the second half of August 1989 and the second half of March 1990.

## **5.2 “Qualitative analysis”**

### **5.2.1 “Magyar Nemzet”**

The Magyar Nemzet, being the organ controlled by Imre Pozsgay, covers the radio interview of Pozsgay in which he stated that the events of 1956 were not a counter-revolution as stated by the party until then, but instead a popular uprising. The paper also prints comments by western media on the statements of Imre Pozsgay, which are all positive.

As to the focus questions concerning the scandals of the past, the content analysis found the following:

Interestingly, although the “Magyar Nemzet” is generally regarded as having supported the democratization process, the paper does not mention the “Dunagate” scandal, as far as the content analysis could identify. This scandal largely de-legitimized the reform forces within the regime in their attempt to distance themselves from the past, and is seen as a major factor in influencing the low election results for the MSZP in March 1990. That it is not mentioned in the “Magyar Nemzet” therefore is not surprising, as it was the organ of exactly these reform forces. It suggests that the paper still to this time remained on the line

of Imre Pozsgay on important issues. This also confirms the findings of the interviews, namely that initially critical articles were only allowed and even supported by the softliners insofar, as they “only” criticised the hardliners, and not the softliners and that they supported the liberalization that the softliners wanted to pursue.

As to the opening of the state archives in autumn of 1989, the first articles on the topic this content analysis found began as of December 1989, criticising that some of these archives are being destroyed in order to prevent information from being made public. On December 28<sup>th</sup> on page 4, for example, the paper prints an article demanding that the State attorney investigates as a criminal offence the destruction of the archives. The paper demands that clear procedures need to be established stipulating what happens with the archives as well as who has access to them. On January 10<sup>th</sup> 1990, on page 3, the paper prints an open letter by the MSZP concerning the allegations of the destruction of the archives, in which the party argues that what was destroyed were not official documents but rather personal documents by officials no longer working in the archives. Nonetheless, as a result of the public outcry, even these documents will no longer be destroyed according to the party. This proved a major example of how press coverage influenced state actions.

As to the additional focus question, namely the round table negotiations and the question of whether the president should be elected by the electorate before the elections of March 1990, or rather by a newly elected parliament, therefore the question of whether Hungary was to be a parliamentary or rather presidential republic, the “Magyar Nemzet” did cover the discussion during the round table negotiations, but only limitedly. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, the paper informs on pages 3,4 and 5 about the commencing of the round table negotiations, and allows different views on the respective issues. Once the SZDSZ had called for a referendum on the subject, however, the paper begins to address the issue more in detail. Once the referendum had been called, the paper becomes a platform for all sides to explain why they are for or against the referendum. An example here includes an interview with a SZDSZ representative on October 18<sup>th</sup> on page 3, in which the SZDSZ receives the opportunity to explain why they want the referendum.

As to the further keyword search findings:

As of January 1989, the paper begins to print as a series the court documents of the show trial of László Rajk (Magyar Nemzet, January 31<sup>st</sup> 1989, page 9). Rajk had been a Hungarian Communist and minister of the interior and foreign affairs in 1948. In 1949 he had fallen victim to Rákosi’s show trials, as he was a homegrown communist, as opposed to the Stalin-backed communist group around Rákosi. Although he had been rehabilitated

already in 1956, the subject remained largely taboo. This, as the Rajk trial had marked the beginning of the removal of all political parties in Hungary as well as the beginning of a strict Stalinist-style communism in the entire soviet bloc, marked by an anti-Titoist drive in the countries under soviet hegemony. Any communist ideas dissenting from Stalin were seen as dangerous and thus eliminated. That the paper brings up the topic in 1989, suggests that the reform communists were attempting to distance themselves from the Stalinist past, aligning themselves with Hungarian communists such as Rajk who enjoyed popular recognition.

The popular front groups already early in 1989 had begun to demand constitutional changes and were beginning to address a changing role of these groups in the emerging multi-party system. The paper follows this and begins to address issues of political / constitutional changes and begins printing articles criticising the dominant role of the party in political, economic and judiciary life. Examples here include:

1. An article on the popular front groups who demanded political / constitutional changes on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 3.
2. A critical interview with a MSZMP member, on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 5, asking whether it would not be problematic that judges are directly elected by the party.
3. An article on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 5, arguing that the coming of the multi-party system will change the role of the popular front as well as stating an internal discussion in the popular front on how best these should respond to the coming changes.
4. An article by the president of the Hungarian National Bank, Bartha Ferenc, on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1989, arguing that the Bank should be under the control of parliament, not under the control of government.
5. On January 15<sup>th</sup> 1990, on page 5, the paper argues that while economic reforms are necessary, first the legal framework needs be erected.

Undoubtedly fostered by the comments of Imre Pozsgay on the events of 1956, a societal discussion on that time as well as the topic of a possible re-burial of Imre Nagy and what exactly happened to him in 1956 begins to surface. In 1989 it was generally believed that his remains were buried together with other people killed in 1956, in a mass grave known as “parcel 301” of the Municipal Kozma Street Cemetery outside of Budapest. On February 15<sup>th</sup> on page 2, the Magyar Nemzet begins to openly write on this so-called “Parcel 301”. The paper writes that the general idea among the population was that Imre Nagy was in the grave. It criticises the regime by stating that while the responsible department say that

they have no idea who was in the grave, it would be a matter of five minutes to look up the respective documents to find out. Additionally, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1989, on page 5, the daughter of Imre Nagy talks on the death of her father, and what she remembers happened. This concentration on Imre Nagy remains largely until the end of June 1989. The reporting on this mass grave symbolised not only a “scratching” on the journalistic limits imposed (even if it occurred with the backing of the softline fraction), but it also shows an example of how the paper picked up relevant issues of society, and began a critical discussion on it.

Additionally, the paper increasingly becomes the platform for oppositional groups that had already formed or were in the process of forming. Initially, the oppositional group mentioned most often was the MDF (which had also been initiated with considerable support of regime members, particularly Pozsgay). This changes as of October 1989 with the referendum, after which the reporting on oppositional groups becomes more balanced. Examples here include

1. An article on March 1<sup>st</sup> on page 2, articulating the demands of the MDF.
2. An article on April 26<sup>th</sup> on page 2, informing that the MDF held a day of debate.
3. Announcements on November 1<sup>st</sup> on page 10, in which various opposition groups including the FIDESZ and the SZDSZ receive the opportunity to inform on party activities and important notices.
4. On November 8<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 3, the paper reports on a press conference held by FIDESZ, in which they state that they would not take money for the party from the state as long as the current system of money transfers to parties is not changed. They demand that the funds of all parties be frozen until clear and transparent system is formed.
5. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1989, on page 5, the paper speaks about the quantity of new parties that have emerged, and explains what they each stand for.
6. On February 27<sup>th</sup> on page 4, the opposition groups, particularly the MDF, FIDESZ and SZDSZ (although more strongly the MDF and FIDESZ) articulate their programmes.

In addition to becoming a platform in which oppositional groups and parties could articulate their demands and programmes, the paper also becomes a platform for intellectuals. On April 12<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 3, for example, the paper prints an open letter by intellectuals, arguing that for a successful societal renewal it is important that a property reform be introduced. State owned companies should be transformed into public property where the people receive money to buy shares.

Around the time of the referendum in 1989, the paper begins to print articles dealing with the MSZP party renewal. On November 1<sup>st</sup> 1989, for example, on page 4, the paper prints an article by Schlett István (later Professor of Political Sciences at ELTE University) in which he asks what has changed, if anything? He asks whether it was like the renewal of a restaurant. Same staff, but did only the name of the restaurant change or also the food? He states that the new party has surely not yet become a party in a European sense. He asks whether the basics of effective governance will be developed? Nonetheless, he argues to give the party the benefit of the doubt, concluding that if you go to a restaurant with a changed name, then you should at least try whether they serve new food, before you judge them according to the old name. As the interviews for this dissertation suggest, these articles undoubtedly were initiated by reform party members in order to advance a public differentiation between the old hardline regime and the new party dominated by reform members.

A dominant topic in the paper between April 1989 to March 1990, is the restructuring of the Hungarian economy, particularly ways of privatization. Examples here include:

1. An article on April 15<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 7, discusses ways of privatizing state companies.
2. On November 1<sup>st</sup> 1989, on page 9, the paper prints an interview with a newly formed company "Capital international", discussing Hungary's need for foreign capital, while at the same time asking whether the capital needs Hungary?
3. On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1989, on page 4, the paper prints a ¼ page article with the header "*Az infláció a teljes csödhöz vezet*", criticising the economic policy of the government. It argues that the government should have built up an inner market, gotten rid of state monopolies, erected a competitive market and changed the property structure of business', before liberalizing the prices. It states that out of the minimal requirements, the government had implemented nearly nothing, which led to a massive rise in inflation.
4. On January 15<sup>th</sup> 1990, on page 5, under the headline "A manámgazdaság jövőt igér" the paper prints a column stating that only private enterprise could be the future of the country.

A dominant topic beginning in March 1989 and remaining strong until November 1989 is the "Bős-Nagymaros" Water barrage. This Water barrage, involving Hungary and Czechoslovakia, envisioned a cross-border barrage system on the river Danube. It was agreed on in November 1977 as part of the "Budapest treaty". Already in 1981, the Hungarian government pressed for a slowdown of the project due to lack of funding. In

1984, the “Danubian Circle”, a group protesting against the project out of environmental reasons, was founded. By the late 1980s it became a hated symbol of the old communist regime, and in 1989, the government suspended the project following widespread public opposition. The suspension created strong ill feeling between the Czechoslovakian and the Hungarian governments, the Hungarian decision being seen as a signal that the reformist government was yielding to popular demands too strongly.

At the end of 1989 / at the beginning of 1990, a dominant topic within the paper is the question of the MSZP party assets. The first articles on this topic already come in November 1989, but increase in quantity and criticism as of February 1990. As already mentioned above, on November 8<sup>th</sup> 1989, the paper became a platform for the FIDESZ demanding a clear and transparent system for party funding. On March 21<sup>st</sup> 1990, on page 5, the paper reports on a court case, where the MSZP is accused of trying to unlawfully redirect state assets, by hiding them and illegally bringing them into different companies.

In the final two months leading to the elections, the paper clearly becomes more independent vis-à-vis the reform forces, and becomes a platform for especially the four biggest parties; namely the FIDESZ, the MDF, MSZP and SZDSZ. As far as this content analysis could make out, the newly founded communist party (MSZMP) receives no platform directly. On March 14<sup>th</sup> 1990, on page 3, the paper prints an article arguing that the MDF and the SZDSZ will become the largest fractions, and analyses what kind of people would have what party affiliation. On March 21<sup>st</sup> on page 5, the paper informs the readers how the election procedure looks, how many forms each voter receives, where he can go and what rights he or she has. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1990, the paper headline reads: “Hungary voted for system change”.

The “Magyar Nemzet” did not demand directly that the Soviet troops should leave Hungary; all articles in this direction were matter of fact articles. The same goes for the “Népszabadság”.

### **5.2.2 “Népszabadság”**

The “Népszabadság” also covers the radio interview of Pozsgay on the events of 1956, on January 30<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 6. It writes that the judgement up to then that the events of 1956 were a counterrevolution is not matched by the findings of the commission. Additionally, in the same article, the paper speaks of the need of a multi-party system,

where the MSZMP will need to work together with one, two or several parties. The paper concludes that maybe it is possible to cooperate with these parties; maybe those who cannot cooperate will end up in the role of an opposition. The paper admits that structural problems exist, part of which was the lack of a political debate and autocratic decisions:

*“Alapvető gond: immár 15-20 éve nem sikerül elérni, hogy az alapfolyamatok és a politikai szándékok egy irányba menjenek, ezek minden akarat ellenére eltérnek egymástól. Ez mutatja, hogy szerkezeti bajok vannak. Ezek közé tartozik, hogy nem volt igazán mélyreható politikai vita, amely a voluntarizmusnak, az önkényes döntésnek gátat szabhatott volna. “*

As to the additional focus questions, the content analysis found the following:

The first article that this content analysis found on the opening of the state archives was on November 24<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 8. In it the “public’s club” states its anxiety that the archives in Budapest and in the countryside would be destroyed by the party. The paper informs its readers that this club had already initiated a discussion on the limits to which the people had the opportunity to research the archives. It argues that since May nothing really changed, demanding that now the archives should really be made public, and that all restrictions should be lifted. Additionally, it demands an official statement about these archives.

As to the “Dunagate” scandal, this content analysis found a first indirect reference to it in the paper on December 20<sup>th</sup>, on page 1, when the interior minister is quoted talking of the need to reform the work of the secret services. On January 24<sup>th</sup> 1990, on page 6, the paper uses a short MTI release to report on the scandal. On January 25<sup>th</sup> 1990, on page 1 + 4, the paper prints government reactions to the scandal. The paper quotes the state secretary of the Interior Ministry who says that he would not admit the allegations of the “Dunagate” scandal, but wants the people to remember that the secret service previously acted according to the old state ideology. The secret service had to gather information on opposition groups and people, as the worldview of these people was not conforming to that of the party. He states that the government has changed much since then. A new initiative in the party was brought through to change the instructions for the secret service as long as no new state security regulation is decided on. The paper is largely on the side of the government.

As to the additional focus question, namely the question of whether the president should be elected by the electorate before the elections of March or rather by a newly elected Parliament, therefore the question of whether Hungary was to be a parliamentary or rather



presidential republic, the paper did cover the discussion during the round table negotiations, but only limitedly. Like the “Magyar Nemzet”, the “Népszabadság” informs about the commencing of the round table negotiations, and allows diverse opinions about the issues, albeit more limited than the “Magyar Nemzet”. Again, this becomes more diverse once it is clear that a referendum will be held. Between November 15<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, the referendum is covered in depth, and both the MSZP and the MDF opposing the referendum as well as the opposition groups in favour of the referendum receive ample possibility to transmit their ideas. Both the MSZP and the opposition receive a platform to offer their views on the referendum.

As to further keyword findings:

Generally, during the initial period of the content analysis, the paper attempts to portray the new leader Károly Grósz as a reformer, beginning a new period after the old regime under János Kádár had ended. This picture fits well to the article on January 30<sup>th</sup>, mentioned before. Firstly, it comments on the remarks by Imre Pozsgay, while at the same time indirectly indicating that now a new system is coming, initiated by the regime. This is also supported by another article on January 30<sup>th</sup>, in which the paper covers the speech made by Grósz during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Grósz speaks of the need for a European economic cooperation. Grósz argues that Europe needs new ways, and a break with the past. For the future it is important that the socialist states, which lag behind in many ways, are able to overcome this backwardness and act successfully as a European partner. In his view the socialist states have no choice but to introduce reforms, and that socialism stands in front of a historical challenge. Recognizing this challenge may free strong energies in order to bring change. Grosz argues that the Soviet *perestroika* is the biggest socialist movement since the revolution of 1917, and that the socialist states are looking at critical years ahead. One big challenge will be that “COMECON” needs to be reformed; another that liberalisation reforms in the socialist states need to improve conditions for western capital and investments.

In general the paper welcomes the changes occurring throughout the entire communist bloc. On April 19<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 1, for example, the paper discusses comments by Hans-Dietrich Genscher (the then Foreign Minister of the FRG) on the need of reforms in socialist states. The article on the whole views positively the processes of change within Central and Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the paper continues to see socialism as the only force to successfully bring reform and a socially balanced situation.

Overall, the paper follows the line of Grósz, arguing that while a time of reform has come, these should not go too far. This is suggested by an article on January 31<sup>st</sup>, on pages 1 and 2, in which the new party leader receives a platform to respond to the interviews made by Pozsgay. Grósz states that he had not heard the statement made by Imre Pozsgay directly, but does not understand why he concentrates on this period so much. He argues that what political significance this will have is still unclear and is not up to one person to decide. Maybe the commission has documents that support the conclusion of Pozsgay, but he (Grósz) has so far not seen them. However, he cannot state at this point whether the findings will lead to a change in the official dogma. The paper follows the position of the hardline fraction of the party on the comments made by Pozsgay, namely that this was his view and not that of the entire politburo. Although in effect Pozsgay had made a political *fait accompli* with the statement, this is initially not acknowledged by the hardliners, and these use the paper to make their views public. Another example of this is an article on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1989, on page 3, in which Janos Lukács, a central committee secretary and member of the political committee, receives an opportunity to express his view. He argues that what Pozsgay said was his own conclusion, not the official stance of the central committee. He states that on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1989, this will be discussed in the central committee, and then an official party position will be formulated.

Nonetheless, at the same time, the split in the party between the hardliners and softliners also becomes apparent in the "Népszabadság". While the "Magyar Nemzet" was clearly controlled by Imre Pozsgay, the "Népszabadság" was subjected to influences from both camps within the regime. An interview, which was published in the same issue as the one with Janos Lukács, albeit on page 5, makes this visible. The interview is conducted with a member of the commission that Pozsgay headed. He states that the reason why the commission was put in place was due to the importance of understanding the past. He explains who was in the commission and how the research had been conducted. He states that the results show that the events were a popular uprising: a suppressed people, living in a terrorist system led a popular uprising against this state. This uprising wanted to renew the socialist system, not do away with it. He concludes that when the soviets came, the uprising changed to a national uprising. This portrays that the paper did not only portray the hardline position (supporting the background research as well as interview findings).

That the paper is not purely the mouthpiece of the hardline party leadership around Grósz, is also suggested by the circumstance that the paper in general becomes a platform for both hardline and softline forces within the politburo. On March 29<sup>th</sup> on page 3 for example, under the headline "*Tulajdonreforma van szüksége Magyarországnak*", the paper quotes

an interview of Imre Pozsgay that he gave for the International Herald Tribune. In it he stated that according to him, by the middle of the 1990s Hungary will have developed into a multi-party democracy. Additionally, he criticises the socialist economic system and suggests how the economies of the socialist states should develop from here, arguing against a combined economic plan. He argues that Hungary does not need a new Marshall plan help, but instead, each country should develop separately according to their own needs: *“Sok nyugati kérdezi, miért van előbb szükségünk politikai reformra ahhoz, hogy lehessen növekedésorientált gazdaságunk. Csak azt felejtik el közben, hogy nekünk nincs gazdaságunk. Amit látnak, az látszatgazdaság, amelyben a politika felfalja a gazdasági tevékenységet és energiát. Helyre kell állítanunk az állampolgárok autonómiáját, tulajdonreform révén kell gazdává tennünk őket. Egyébként az új alkotmányunk által biztosított jogok üresek maradnak.”*

Furthermore, on April 12<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 7, the paper mentions discussions of the MSZMP reform circle “platform freedom”, and discusses the various independent reform platforms being formed within the party. On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 1, under the header *“Reformunk nemzetközi feltételei” – “Horn Gyula előadása”*, the party prints comments by the party reformer and as of 1990 the Chairman of the MSZP, Gyula Horn. Horn clearly speaks out for a democratic system, a multi-party system and the market economy. He argues that while the party was not in crisis, the inner party stability was made difficult by the fact that Hungary was witnessing an economic crisis. Additionally, the party was facing certain divisions concerning values and ideological questions. He criticises the party development, arguing that although the political style changed, no changes were made as to the structure of power and exercise of power. This led to an inner party stagnation in the last 15 years. As to demands by some reformers concerning Hungary’s future role in the soviet bloc, Horn argues that Hungary should not and cannot leave the Warsaw pact.

Additionally, the paper already in February begins critical articles on reform plans by the party, as well as the internal party reforms. On February 8<sup>th</sup>, on page 3, for example, the paper prints an own commentary under the header *“Alkotmányráltozatok”*, which is critical towards the change of the constitution. The article is filled with sarcasm, and does not understand why the party leadership argues that the new constitution should be finished by 1990 by the earliest. The journalist sarcastically says that he would like it earlier, but that one needs to accept the stance of the party. Although the decisions of the party leadership until now had always come autocratically too quickly, now in this case they “need to take time”. Again sarcasm becomes evident, as the commentary asks why now it takes so long when usually everything needs to be done quickly. The journalist agrees with

the party that a constitutional reform is necessary, but does not understand why it takes so long. He praises the fact that a discussion in the party is underway, that the grass roots finally have something to say. He states that currently many opinions are being heard; even alternative organisations can make their opinions public. The commentary views this positively, and praises that while before the law making process involved little discussion of party members and societal groups, now the working has become better, more formalised, involving a wide range of different opinions.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1989, on page 4, the paper criticises the government that journalists are not allowed to join the “closed” meetings of parliament. The newspaper argues that the public has the right to find out what is discussed in parliament.

On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 8, the paper prints a commentary with the header “*Csernok Atilla: A megújulás buktatói*”. The commentary criticises the party, arguing that as long as the economy worked the party took the credit, but now that the crisis has come they distance themselves from the economy, blaming economists, stating that the workers are too lazy, and arguing that the changes initiated are taking longer than expected. It concludes by arguing that if we (the party) do not want that the last drop of trust is lost, then the party needs to face its responsibilities. The party needs to renew itself down to the roots and to free itself from the old legacy.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1989, on page 3, the paper addresses the renewal of itself. In reference to the societal changes, the newspaper cannot cover all aspects. It remains the organ of the party and follows the aims of the party, but wants to create a newspaper that represents and portrays a broad range of societal opinions and discussions.

And indeed the paper does become a platform for a wide range of oppositional groups and parties. Nonetheless, the extent to which opposition groups receive a platform is not as strongly the case as in the “Magyar Nemzet”. Although the paper stated it would open the paper to a broad range of opinions and discussions in March 1989, this content analysis found that this only really began as of June 1989, with the beginning of the round table negotiations. Example here include:

1. A commentary on June 7<sup>th</sup> on page 7, in which Fodor Gabor, a member of FIDESZ, argues for the need of quick political reforms. In the commentary named “*Európa csak egy lépés?*” Gabor argues that many are saying that political reforms should come slow, as it is dangerous to have political reforms too far ahead of economic reforms. But he thinks that the danger of the political reforms overtaking economic

reforms are much less dangerous than if the political reforms as such are too slow. He argues that political reforms should go more quickly, only then can Hungary come “back to Europe”.

2. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, on pages 4 +5, the paper becomes a platform for the independent democratic league and national peoples front.
3. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, the MDF in an open letter demand the resignation of Aczél György, the father of the 3 T model mentioned earlier.
4. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the paper prints an article on page 2, in which an MDF gathering is covered. It mentions that the MDF demand early elections in December 1989.
5. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, on page 3, the paper prints a column on the round table negotiations, and informs its readers on what the topics of the negotiations are, including demands by oppositional groups.

Initially, the opportunity for opposition groups to receive a platform is limited, and the MDF receive more opportunity than other opposition groups. This appears to be in connection with the hopes by the MSZMP to enter a coalition with the MDF after the next elections.

This changes as of November 1989, following the renaming of party and the split with the party's hardline fraction. Thereafter, the number of critical reporting become more, and more opposition groups are mentioned. On January 24<sup>th</sup> 1990, on page 2, the paper becomes the platform for the SZDSZ, who state that they want a fair fight, and argue that the MSZP often use unfair means of propaganda to fight the SZDSZ.

The paper largely welcomes the renaming of the party, arguing that a new democratic era has begun (October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1989, page 1). The paper fosters the aim of the MSZP in trying to portray the party as a modern reform party, arguing on February 14<sup>th</sup> on page 3, that in reality oppositional ideas are often born in the MSZP: *“EMLÉKEK A SLAMPOS DIKTAT'RA EVEIBŐL: Az ellenzeki gondolatok gyakran az MSZP-ben születtek”*.

Interesting appears to be that in comparison to the “Magyar Nemzet”, the paper does not only become a platform for the democratic opposition, but also for the reformed communist party under Grósz. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1989, on page 2, the paper quotes the MSZMP who argue that should the centre-right groups win the next general elections, a petit-bourgeois dictatorship would emerge. Additionally, the MSZMP party programme is explained.

Similar to the “Magyar Nemzet”, a dominant topic in the paper is the economic reforms, often criticising the lack of in the past, and arguing what possibilities exist in future. Examples include:

1. On February 15<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 7, the paper prints a book review that critically analyses the economic reforms since the 1950s. The book argues that now not only reform rhetoric is necessary, but rather real tangible action. Already in 1955 politics hindered economic development. After the 1970s important reforms became necessary but the central committee instead introduced reforms that were not enough to significantly improve the situation. Far reaching steps remained out. The first chance for real chance to overcome stagnation came in Mai 1988 (on the party congress). However, this process is far from over, and the experiences of the last 30 years show that reform processes often stopped. In order to ensure that this will not happen this time, it is important that the political leadership remains strongly on course of economic reform. No reform rhetoric is necessary for this, but instead real tangible action.
2. On June 7<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 8, the paper prints an own commentary demanding that the government publicise more economical statistics from the statistical ministry. It argues that if statistics are being published, then at least the entire picture should be made public. It criticises that the Hungarian deficit is published as a net statistic, instead of publishing the gross deficit number.
3. On September 27<sup>th</sup> 1989, on 2, the “Népszabadság” prints an article analysing which economic model Hungary should now best follow, and whether Hungary should join “Efta”.
4. On November 4<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 4, the paper addresses a general insecurity among the population concerning privatization in form of a commentary. The apparent attempt made, is to ease some of the fears concerning privatization and to foster a societal discussion on the topic.

The “Népszabadság” also begins reporting on the Water barrage programme “Bös-Nagymaros”, although considerably later than the “Magyar Nemzet”. The first content analysis article on the topic in the “Népszabadság” came on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1989, in which the paper quotes the West-German “Süddeutsche Zeitung”. The article argues that the Hungarian actions are entering international dimensions; as for the first time in the communist bloc’s history a socialist state is ending its commitments towards another socialist state. As mentioned before, the “Magyar Nemzet” in comparison already begins reporting on the subject as of the first half of March 1989.

The elections are only limitedly covered in the paper between March 15<sup>th</sup> – March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1990. During this time the oppositional parties still receive a platform to elucidate the aims of their parties and their programmes. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, for example, the SZDSZ receive a ¼ page interview on page 7, in which they state that they see the natural opposition for themselves in form of the MDF. Nonetheless, no direct ads for the parties are placed. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, on page 4, the paper prints an article that states that the MSZP will be under the top three to four parties following the elections. As of March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the paper prints more articles on the elections, however, the opposition no longer seem to receive a platform.

Similar to the “Magyar Nemzet”, the “Népszabadság” begins to ask critical questions concerning MSZMP party assets. Already on June 7<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 7, the paper prints an interview asking whom the estates belong to that the party controls, and whether the party should be forced to give part of its assets to the emerging oppositional parties.

Interesting to observe, is that both the “Magyar Nemzet “ and the “Népszabadság” begin a critical reporting of Ceausescu long before this is the case in the media of the GDR. The content analysis suggests that while the GDR media only begin to criticise Ceausescu in the last months of 1989, the first anti- Ceausescu articles this content analysis could identify in the Hungarian media already began in March 1989. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, on page 3, for example, the “Népszabadság” prints an article quoting an MTI statement about the international anti- Ceausescu mood as well as an open letter by former high-ranking Romanian officials criticising the dictator. Undoubtedly, as the Moscow imposed friendship among the socialist “brother states” was breaking, the traditional - but since 1945 publicly dormant - animosities between the two countries resurfaced. This also coincided with the struggle of the ethnic Hungarian minority in the Romanian Transylvania region, which led to thousands of refugees leaving Romania for Hungary at the end of the 1980s. As the background research and interviews for this dissertation suggested, the Hungarian reform government early on allowed the media to begin a critical reporting on Romania, up to then a novelty in the internal relations of Soviet bloc countries. This was therefore also confirmed by the content analysis.

Although the “Népszabadság” does report on the events of 1956 and later on the reburial of Imre Nagy, this is by no means as fervent as in the “Magyar Nemzet”. The content analysis did not find articles on “parcel 301”, and the paper largely appears to follow a restricted reporting on the matter. On May 18<sup>th</sup> 1989, on page 3, for example, the paper

simply informs its readers on a commission which had been formed to re-investigate the sentencing of Imre Nagy.

## **6. The role of the Media during the transformation process**

Analysing the media in Hungary in 1989 to 1990, one comes to the conclusion that the media were by far more liberalized and independent as their GDR counterparts. The liberal “goulash communism” implemented since the 1960s leading to a comparably liberal society in the soviet bloc, the reform orientated regime members (strengthened by the party conference in May 1988), the reform orientated media *nomenklatura*, the open conflict in the regime between the hardliners and the softliners, as well as the privatization of the press, all fostered an increasingly independent media landscape by 1989. Additionally, the processes of reform and change occurring throughout the region but especially also in Hungary in 1989 until the elections in March of 1990, increased the media’s possibilities to emerge as an independent actor and to assume the role of a fourth estate. Indeed, by the end of 1989 the media –especially the press – found themselves in a limbo position. Although new democratic rules had not yet been officially set, at the same time, the degree the party was able to or even willing to exert influence over the media had eased drastically. Several liberalization reforms that had been implemented previously certainly supported this. Overall a vacuum had formed which allowed the journalists to act more freely. As a result, a “culture of critical discourse” (Gouldner, 1979) had replaced party jargon.

The media *nomenklatura* – being so close to the regime - were the first to notice that this vacuity had come, that something was changing. Noticing that something was changing increased their readiness to openly address previous taboo topics. However, the interviews as well the available literature suggest that the media also in the Hungarian case were not the forerunners of the democratization process. Instead, the media began covering the opposition groups and organizations directly once these had become strong enough to publicly fight against the regime and once the regime allowed the media more liberties. Only then – eventually - did the media emerge as an independent actor, further influenced by the changing ownership structures of the media landscape and the thus developing competitive environment. As argued by Dr. Kajdi, once these points happened, the positive role of the media is undeniable; latest by the spring of 1989 there was an explosion of media coverage about the presence of opposition organizations and their political goals, mainly in a positive “interpretation” (Interview Dr. Kajdi, 01.04.2008). This is



also supported by the interview with Dr. Szabó, who argues that in 1989 there developed an own momentum that led to greater media autonomy and critical coverage, but that without the initiation by high ranking communists to do so, this would not have been possible (Interview Dr. Szabó, 19.2.2008). Lipovecs argues similarly, namely that until 1988 the journalists were similar to journalists in the rest of the soviet bloc and that they showed little courage to oppose the status quo. This changed only once the sluices began to be opened by the regime, for example by the radio interview with Imre Pozsgay in January 1989 (Interview Lipovecs, 15.02.2008).

It is important to mention that the interviews for this dissertation suggest that in 1989 the media began to undergo a process of commercialization. This process influenced the media output enormously. As argued by Dr. Szabó, in 1989 the media became more pluralistic but also more business like, following the reality of a market economy where one needs what sells best. This logic became the dominant driving force behind what was covered by the media (Interview Dr. Szabó, 19.02.2008). This is also supported by the interview with András Heltai-Hopp, who argues that the initial euphoria that the journalists had, that they could finally write freely, was soon gone. Although the political freedom to write critically had come to a large extent, the economic reality placed new restrictions on the journalists. For many this came as a shock, as they learned that one could not only write freely, but that one also had to make money (Interview Heltai-Hopp, 18.02.2008). This logic influenced the choice of topics covered. Heltai-Hopp concludes that for many journalists the privatization process had a different influence than initially anticipated. While one could write more openly, in the end this openness was limited as only those articles were printed that could also be sold (Interview Heltai-Hopp, 18.02.2008).

When analysing the role of the media during the transformation process in Hungary, it again makes sense to continue the differentiation of “output” and “outcome” analysis as used previously. Again, the first, the “output” analysis looks at the output of the media in order to investigate whether the respective media and its journalists favourably supported the transformation process. The second, “outcome” analysis attempts to shed light into the question whether the media did indeed have a positive influence on the process.

### **6.1.1 Output**

As identified in the foregoing chapters, the Hungarian media landscape since the 1960s had witnessed a gradually increasing liberalization. The societal, political and economical

reforms initiated by the Kádár regime, marked by a high degree of reformist pragmatism and comparably high liberties given to the people, had made sure that by the 1980s Hungary was one of the most liberal countries of the region. As to the media set up, the return of former dissidents to the media following the amnesty of the 1960s, the inclusion of many reform orientated communists in the party *nomeklatura* responsible for dictating the media, the media privatization in 1988 as well as the overall more liberal society in comparison to the other countries in the soviet bloc, all made sure that by the middle of 1989 the media were in the position to bring an output supporting change. And indeed, the research for this dissertation suggests that the respective media did attempt to positively influence the developing reform process in various ways.

During the period of research, the Hungarian media in general attempted to favourably support the democratization process in the following ways:

1. They began to make scandals of the past but also of the present public. Examples here are: the issue of the opening of archives, where the media began criticising the half-hearted attempts by the regime to sincerely open them up as well as cases where the regime supported the destruction of these; the “Dunagate” scandal, which was uncovered by the media and made public; or the question of party assets. These “scandals” of the past including misuses of power, led to a call in the papers (but also society) of the introduction of “democratic control mechanisms”.
2. Additionally, the media became a platform for the developing opposition groups, making their programmes, meetings and leaders public. A special wire service (Országos Sajtószolgálat – “the national press service”) was established to offer opposition groups a platform to convey their messages and statements (Sükösd, 2000, pg 145). Argued by Pach (Interview Pach, 14.11.06), as so much was happening daily, it became very difficult for the opposition groups to make the editors aware of their press releases as these were simply bombarded with information. The wire service gave the editors the possibility to search for information they thought was important, while at the same time facilitating the work of the opposition groups, as they simply sent one press release instead of addressing each media individually.
3. The media began articulating topics important to society and in this began telling the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future. With this, they attempted to assume an „agenda-setting“ function. A central example here is the demand for economic reform and ways of privatization, which became a dominant topic in the media as of April 1989 according to the content analysis. Another is the discussion on “parcel 301”.

In addition, especially positive influences in the developing reform process for each respective newspaper of analysis could be identified:

#### “Magyar Nemzet”

As has already been established, the “Magyar Nemzet” was the organ of the reform wing of the communist party as well as of the popular front groups. In this, the paper supported the reform process in following ways:

1. The paper became a platform for the views of the reform orientated regime members. This not only made the split within the regime apparent but also fostered an internal party democratization process.
2. The paper increasingly argued to differentiate the reform forces within the regime from the former hardline regime of Rákosi, Kádár or even from people such as Grósz. In order to do this, it began to mention former communists that opposed the Stalinist doctrine (such as Rajk) and indirectly aligning them with the reform forces. But at the same time, it *de facto* broke on previous taboo topics and supported a societal discussion on mistakes of the past, including Stalinism in general.
3. Several reform regime members, including most notably Imre Pozsgay, supported the formation of opposition groups such as the MDF. As a result these then received a platform in the “Magyar Nemzet” to publicise their ideas, meetings and events, before this was often the case in other official newspapers. An example here is surely the interview with Pozsgay printed in the Magyar Nemzet, in November 1987, in which he openly talked about the meeting at Lakitelek including the formation and demands of the MDF. As of March 1989, this content analysis found that the paper continuously acted as the platform for the opposition groups. This lies in contrast to the “Népszabadság”, in which this content analysis found the first examples where the paper became a platform for these groups as of August 1989.
4. As the paper was not only the organ of the reform forces within the MSZMP, but officially the organ of the popular front groups, the paper began to act as the platform from which these began to articulate their growing independence from the party as well as to demand political / constitutional changes. The first examples in this direction this content analysis found, already began in February 1989.

#### “Népszabadság”

As has been established in the content analysis, the “Népszabadság” became a platform for both regime hardliners and softliners. In this, the paper especially supported the

democratization process in the following ways:

1. It fostered a societal discussion on previously taboo topics as both the hardline and softline views became public.
2. The *nomenklatura* of the paper were party members. In this, the fact that both party reformers and hardliners were mentioned together with the fact that the journalists themselves often addressed critical issues – especially issues concerning the reform of socialism, of the economy, of the political system as well as the reform of the party itself – intended to foster an internal party discussion and liberalization process.

### **6.1.2 “In between the lines”**

Research for this dissertation suggests that the need for writing in between the lines for Hungarian journalists in 1989 was no longer as necessary as before. As remembered by András Heltai-Hopp, the liberalization of the 1980s had culminated by 1989, as a result of which the journalists began to directly address critical topics and no longer needed to do so “in between the lines”. Instead, Heltai-Hopp argues that the writing “in between the lines” was more characteristic for the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was also confirmed by the interview with Dr. Kajdi, who argues that already from the middle of 1989, the media became “masterless” and could thus write articles which would have been inconceivable even a half year before (Interview, Dr. Kajdi, 01.04.2008). This is also supported by Miklós Sükösd, who suggests that already by 1988 a power vacuum was becoming evident, one that the journalists began to exploit. Hence, as a result by 1989 “the unrestricted political agenda of the *samizdat* surfaced in the legal (official) media public sphere” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 141).

And indeed, the content analysis also suggest that by 1989 the press was free in their writing to that extent, that “in between the lines” was no longer necessary. Although the press continued to support the regime to a strong degree (at least the reform orientated forces), if criticism was made or if taboo topics were raised, this was done directly. Furthermore, the actions of the reform regime forces directly supported this. Statements made by the party reform circles in the newspapers or also by Imre Pozsgay regarding the founding of the MDF, increasingly made it politically and socially acceptable for journalists to do the same. Hence, no examples of “in between the line” criticism were found during the content analysis.

### 6.1.3 Outcome

It is important to highlight at this point again that, as mentioned previously, the Hungarian media enjoyed considerable credibility in the eyes of the population. This largely positive public attitude towards the media and their journalists increased the ways in which the media could influence society in the sense of an “agenda setting”. And indeed, the research for this analysis, predominately the interviews, suggests that the “output” as identified above did have an influence on the democratization process. This influence mainly arose in the following ways:

1. The regime divisions and the actions of reform elites created a power vacuum that the journalists could exploit. Similar to the situation in the GDR, the media *nomenklatura* – partly representing the regime and being so close to the top regime leadership circle - were the first to notice that this vacuity had come, that something was changing. Noticing that something was changing increased their readiness to openly address previous taboo topics. This change was then perceived by the population and the opposition groups, who in turn felt more confident to voice direct opposition. Dr. Tamás Deutsch-Für, member of the FIDESZ, supports this. He argues that when people noticed that even journalists were taking freedoms, the society step by step also took more liberties (Interview, Deutsch-Für, 15.02.2008). According to Deutsch-Für, at the beginning of 1989, most media “output” still followed the communist propaganda, even if only the “softline” version. But what really concerned people were the small examples of critical reporting that had already begun. When these came, everyone wanted to read them, as it was a sensation that after 40 years of communism the media was beginning to break free and that not only communist propaganda could be read. This was the case for both newspapers of analysis. Nonetheless, it is important to state once again that it was the reform communists that at the beginning directly instructed the media to write more critically or rather even used the media to voice reform views through interviews directly. An example here is surely the remarks by Imre Pozsgay in the “Magyar Nemzet” on the formation of the MDF with their demands. This, however, does not diminish the positive effects these critical articles had on society.
2. As to making the scandals of the past but also the present public, the media fostered a continual erosion of party legitimacy in society and at times forced about change. An example of this is the topic of the opening of state archives. Following

the massive media coverage concerning the apparent lack of public access to these archives together with allegations in the media that these archives were even being destroyed, the regime publicly apologized. Furthermore, it stated that although only personal documents related to former employees had been destroyed, as a result of the public outcry now also these would no longer be destroyed. Additionally, public access to these archives became easier. Moreover, although neither media of analysis were forerunners in the media sector on making the “Dunagate” scandal public, the interviews for this dissertation suggest that the media that did bring the scandal to light played a dominant role in de-legitimizing the regime. As this scandal was being made public by the media, it was not only a major setback to the attempts of the new leadership to distance themselves from the past, increasing the already battered position of the party in society - but it also led to an increase in the public’s call for more democratic control. It was suggested that a one-party system lacking democratic checks and balances would ultimately lead to such actions. The media covered the scandal in terms of “constitutionalism versus Socialist Party hegemony” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 147). In this case, the media played the role of a 4<sup>th</sup> estate usually attested to the media in a democratic system. As a result of the scandal, the head of the group in the Interior Ministry working against ‘internal reaction’ and the deputy minister supervising state security were sacked. Finally, the interior minister resigned (Rainer, 2000), suggesting just how far the process of democratization had already progressed.

3. By bringing the faces and programmes of the emerging opposition into the public’s perception, the media began setting a new “democratic agenda” (Bajomi-Lázár, 2001, pg 188). As suggested by Sükösd, as the media began reporting on the events of the opposition, they began spreading their political communications to the public, giving them a public presence, a public face, and contributing to the legitimation and pluralization of these opposition groups. “In effect, the Hungarian media helped to rescue the democratic opposition from the small and relatively closed “intellectual ghetto” to which it had been relegated over the preceding decades. Eventually, the media played a crucial role in making the political programs, policy alternatives, and leaders of the new parties known to the emerging Hungarian electorate” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 145). The media were thus a factor in mobilizing the citizens for participation in the looming elections and in a general participation in the new democracy, resocializing the Hungarians to accept democratic values (Ibid). A clear example here is the referendum of 1989, initiated by the SZDSZ. The regime had planned Hungary to become a presidential republic, where the president was to be elected prior to the parliamentary elections

of March 1990. This would have most likely allowed the regime, most probably in the person of Imre Pozsgay, to effectively hold onto power in a new democratic multi-party system, even if the parliamentary elections would not bring a MSZP majority. This was largely prevented by the referendum, during which the opposition could publicise their agendas and reasons for the referendum through the media. As a result, the referendum brought a public support for the SZDSZ initiative. Additionally, it boosted the popularity and profile of the SZDSZ, as up to then it had been a junior partner in the opposition forces known mainly to the urban voters. The same went for the FIDESZ, who also supported the referendum. Argued by Deutsch-Für, the referendum greatly boosted the image of the FIDESZ party because it and the SZDSZ had received so much media coverage (Interview Deutsch-Für, 15.02.2008). Suggested by Péter Bajomi-Lázár, through their work, the media fostered the development of a new political socialization: by transmitting the norms of the pluralistic western democracies, they changed the political culture of the Hungarians. This was increased by the fact that various newspapers offered free space for classified advertising of the meetings of parties, their addresses as well as contact person. This all supported a process of a “personalization” of politics, as people previously unknown became the faces of the newly emerging oppositional forces through the media coverage on them (Including people such as Viktor Orbán).

4. Sükösd argues, “by covering crucial political events of great symbolic importance, the mass media reinforced and legitimized the symbolic appropriation of the national past and democratic traditions by the new democratic parties” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 146). Surely the most symbolic of these was the coverage of the reburial of Imre Nagy, the March 15<sup>th</sup> gathering as well as the October 23<sup>rd</sup> demonstrations commemorating the 1956 revolution (Dayan & Katz, 1992, quoted in Sükösd, 2000, pg 146).
5. By acting as a platform for reform communists, the newspapers fostered a critical discussion on topics taboo until then, and strengthened the position of the reform forces vis-à-vis the hardliners especially Grósz. As argued by Tökés, the fact that the radio interview with Imre Pozsgay concerning his commissions findings on the events of 1956 were subsequently picked up by all major media, created a political “*fait accompli*”, and prevented a looming military putsch by Károly Grósz and a small amount of hardliners in the politburo. With this he had forced the entire party to “confront the central legitimacy dilemma of the Kádár era” (Tökés, 1997, pg 114) and had made a societal discussion on the topic politically acceptable. On the other hand, it widely strengthened the position of the reform communists in the eyes of

the people vis-à-vis the hardliners, and thus strengthened their authority. Another dominating example of taboo topics raised, are the articles on parcel “301” brought up by the media. As already mentioned, Imre Nagy was a taboo topic, by beginning to openly address who was in the collective grave – while it was generally believed that it was Imre Nagy among others – not only fuelled the discussion on the person of Imre Nagy and thus directly on the events of 1956, but it also symbolised an attempt by the media to break on previous taboos. Although the dissertation research suggests that initially it was the softline fraction of the regime that instructed the media (in this example the “Magyar Nemzet”) to begin reporting on the issue, it undoubtedly not only fostered a discussion on Imre Nagy (leading to his reburial in March) but it also sent a clear signal to the readers that the regime was split up and later on in retreat.

6. In this both newspapers of analysis had an effect on the internal communist party democratization process. On the one hand, the media gave reform forces within the regime the possibility to make their standpoints clear, thus placing pressure on the hardliners. On the other hand, the journalists, often reform communists themselves (especially in the case of the *Népszabadság*), began to tell the truth as they saw it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future. Again, they too pressurised the hardliners to allow both a party democratization as well as a democratization in society.

Furthermore, the journalists began articulating political topics previously not discussed, issues important to society or issues relevant for the imminent transition ( assuming an “agenda setting function”) themselves in addition to simply becoming a platform for the opposition or party reform forces to articulate these. A dominant example here is the question of economic reform and privatization. Another is the issue of the Water barrage programme “Bős Nagymaros”. For many people of Hungary as well as many media workers, the opposition to the project arose mainly as it was seen as a heritage of the old hated hardline communist system. At the same time, however, as argued by Ivan Lipovecs (Interview Lipovecs, 15.02.2008) much of the opposition was voiced through the argument of environmental problems. Thus, the media became a platform for the discussion of environmental issues and for environmental groups.

Additionally, the media mobilised for political demonstrations as in the summer of 1989 for the funeral ceremony of Imre Nagy, which placed great pressure on the regime and forced them to quicken the reform process of the country. Tamás Deutsch-Für argues that it was important that the media began covering topics important to the democratization process,



even if the media system as such opposed these issues. An example here is the referendum initiated by parts of the opposition in 1989. According to Deutsch-Für, important for the democratization process was that while the media did not openly support the referendum, at the same time, they did not openly oppose it. Instead, the media neutrally and objectively reported on it, giving both sides the position to argue for or against it (Interview Deutsch-Für, 15.02.2008). Consequently, as argued by Bajomi-Lázár, by articulating issues previously not discussed as well as creating a platform for the opposition to be voiced, the media and the journalists created a pluralistic public discourse long before a system with democratic institutions was established (Bajomi-Lázár, 2001, pg 188).

In the Hungarian case, perhaps even more so than in the case of the GDR, when analysing the media “outcome”, it is important to look at the different roles of the “Journalists” as individual actors on the one hand, and the “Media” as an institution on the other. The media as an institution not only signalled that the first cracks in the one party state had come. Additionally, the print media – in the case of the content analysis especially the “Magyar Nemzet” – was instructed by Imre Pozsgay to act as a platform for the reform forces within the regime and the increasingly independent popular front groups, and to begin a reporting on the opposition activists and intellectuals (initially most strongly on the MDF). This undoubtedly increased the societal discussion already present and allowed the reform forces to make public their ideas. When the reform forces around Imre Pozsgay were then no longer as possible to exert their influence on the media workers, and the hardliners had lost their authority even more strongly, this role became even more dominant. The journalists then out of different reasons began to assert more independence from the regime and began to become more critical in tone against the entire regime also vis-à-vis the reform forces. Opposition groups then received more opportunity to voice their positions, and criticism largely developed beyond control of the softline forces. Additionally, scandals such as “Dunagate”, but also increasingly economic problems and questions of party assets de-legitimised the attempts by the reform forces to appear as modernising mavericks.

## **VI. The GDR and Hungary: a comparison**

It is no surprise that as the GDR and Hungary represent different modes of transition, so too did the preconditions of the respective media to influence the developing processes differ.

Regime change in the GDR and in Hungary came through two different paths: the former was change through “revolution”, and as argued by Stokes, one not by an organised opposition but instead by “an entire people” against the regime which lost control (Stokes, 1993, pg 140). In the GDR, the organised opposition that formed came largely from the masses on the streets in the last months of 1989. These then brought a rapid political mobilization, or what O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) call a “popular upsurge”. This upsurge forced within a short period of time some significant political concessions, through a replacement by slightly more reformist (softline) forces, which then initiated a “liberalization” phase.

In the case of Hungary, it was a “negotiated revolution” (Bruszt, 1990), through a peaceful, regime-controlled opening. A reformist force from above reinforced the opposition, where the opening was initiated by pragmatic segments of the ruling elite. The formation of opposition groups such as the MDF and the introduction of the Hungarian round-table negotiations, both supported or initiated by the state, reflected an acceptance on part of the softliners of the inevitability of far-reaching political change. It was intended to serve as an example of political action on part of the elite, which should benefit and legitimize both the reformist group within the regime and the opposition movements that formed and were invited to participate (Ekiert, 1991, pg 307). Thus, in Hungary the transition was a process of political erosion over a long period of time, rather than sudden failure.

This naturally placed the respective media under two different pre-conditions. Comparing the media in the respective countries of research, one clearly comes to the conclusion that by 1989, the Hungarian media landscape was much more pluralistic, more critical and more independent than its GDR counterpart. This had been suggested by the background reading and by the interviews conducted and had indeed been confirmed by the content analysis. Thus, while the media in Hungary had already been addressing critical issues at the beginning of the research time, in the GDR this only developed during the last 6 months of the research time. A direct comparison between the content analysis findings (see the quantitative analysis findings of the GDR and Hungary surely suggests this.

In the GDR, the regime attempted to prevent any debate of reform or liberalization in society and attempted to strictly control the media output. Furthermore, the media system until October 1989 largely remained in the hands of hardline party *nomenklatura* members, marked most evidently by the person of Joachim Herrmann.

In Hungary, one had a regime where the party softliners largely controlled the media and which not only gave the media more autonomy but also already at the end of 1987 / beginning of 1989, had directly instructed the media to begin a critical discussion in order to both facilitate further reforms which they believed were necessary, and to portray themselves as modernizing mavericks in order to strengthen their legitimacy. Additionally, the reforms in Hungary since 1956, by 1989 had overall created a society that was far more liberal than was the case in the GDR. As stated by Swain: "Hungary by the mid-1980s had enjoyed more than twenty years of 'goulash communism' under János Kádár...and more than fifteen years of the most radically reformed economy of the Soviet bloc" (Swain, 2006, pg 145).

Thus, while in Hungary, the pattern of party control over the media system became subtler over time, in the GDR little changed in the post-Stalinist era. In Hungary direct influence over the media eased considerably, although of course censorship remained. As the journalists remained heavily dependent on party well wishing in keeping their job, the form of censorship, however, shifted more towards a form of self-censorship. As suggested by Sükösd, "self-censorship became a commonly accepted and internalized norm among intellectuals, journalists, and authors, reinforced by the belief that the divided Europe of Yalta systems would remain in place for at least one or two generations" (Sükösd, 2000, pg 131). This too, however, diminished over time. In the GDR also, censorship was mixed with a form of self-censorship, although the mechanisms of direct control and direct censorship remained much more strongly in place than in Hungary.

In Hungary, this liberalization of the media initiated by the reformist regime, was supported by the privatization of parts of the media system as early as 1988. This process positively affected transition by eliminating a direct control of the party over the working of the media. Additionally, it in many respects not only allowed them to do so, but rather also forced the entire media system to write more openly due to a growing commercialization. This process in the GDR occurred only at a later stage, but the first influences of a changing economic working reality could be identified as of November 1989.

The dissertation before had assumed that changing economic restrictions began to

change the form of media output – leading to a commercialization - shortly after the liberalization had been initiated, while the single-party state was technically still in place. The research findings for this dissertation, therefore indeed suggest that this was the case.

Hence, as it dawned to the vast number of journalists that the party state was coming to an end, and that this very state was no longer in the position to guarantee an economically unrestricted press, the journalists found themselves in an ever more commercialised environment. This meant that in order to survive economically, the newspapers and the journalists had to increasingly adapt to a market orientated approach of making news. Faced with the necessity to deliver an interesting product to the readers, the media, even the official party press, could no longer simply print party propaganda. Competition among one another (as well as with the former illegal “samizdat” publications) increased this. Indeed, the findings of the dissertation for both countries of research suggest that as remembered by Dr. Zoltan Szabó (Interview, 19.2.2008), in 1989 the Media became more pluralistic but at the same time also more business like. As argued by Dr. Szabó, in a market economy, one needs to write what sells. That became a dominant and driving force behind what was covered by the media. In Hungary this process was boosted by the circumstance that much of the Hungarian media landscape had already been privatised between 1988 to 1989. In 1989 most official quality newspapers were sold either completely or at least partially, which gave them an increased autonomy vis-à-vis the regime, and increased the competition pressure on these to write more interestingly for the readers. But also in the GDR – although the majority of newspapers were only privatised or placed in trust after the March 1990 elections – this gradually became visible following the opening of the Berlin-Wall in November 1989, bringing the entry of West-German newspapers on the East-German market. In the GDR although initially this was not purely a direct financial pressure (many still receiving subsidies), as the influx of West-German newspapers lowered the sales of the East-German press, the East German journalists began to fear losing their jobs should their newspapers not manage to successfully retain their readers on the long run (Interview Bötcher, 19.3.2008).

Henceforth the newspaper had to go with the time, which meant a step-by-step increase in the commercialization and “boulevardization” of the entire media landscape (Interview Heltai-Hopp, 18.2.2008). Additionally, the increasingly commercialised environment led to an ever more investigative journalism. Thus, in both cases by end of 1989 at the latest, as the regimes were in a state of decay, no longer in the position to subsidise this vast economic burden, the journalists were thrown into cold water: overnight, they had to follow an increasingly commercial logic which stated that only if they successfully attract readers,

can they survive financially.

This naturally dramatically changed the system –being aware of this situation caused by the fact that they simply could no longer finance this media empire; the regimes were forced to allow the media more leniency in making news. The journalists were faced with the economic necessity of changing party faithfulness with a loyalty towards the expectation of the readers. This was a tremendous impetus for the media to begin a more unbiased and critical stance towards politics, increasingly acquiring the position of “fourth estate” as usually attested to the media in western democracies.

Although by 1989, the media in Hungary was by far more liberalized and independent from the regime than was the case in the GDR, the findings of this dissertation suggests that by the end of 1989, the media also in the GDR began to break free from party control and emerge step-by-step as an independent actor in unfolding democratization process. In the GDR this occurred rapidly in four ways:

Firstly, following the replacement of Honecker, softline party members took over controlling the media, marked most evidently by the replacement of Joachim Herrmann with Günter Schabowski. These then began to allow greater media autonomy. This process was boosted by signs of a demoralization among many lower rank and file elite members in sense of purpose and discipline to defend the SED’s right to rule (a similar process also became evident in Hungary).

Secondly, as the SED was increasingly standing with its back to the wall, the block parties began to distance themselves from the communists, demanding reforms and beginning to question the leading role of the SED positioning themselves for a multi-party system that now seemed possible.

Thirdly, as the events at the end of 1989 were unfolding, the journalists suddenly found themselves in a short time of vacuity, where the party was no longer able and willing to exert as much influence over the media as was previously the case. This occurred drastically in the first months of October 1989. As a consequence, suddenly the external mechanisms of control vanished, where the media workers suddenly found themselves free to express themselves, to pursue their own interests, to tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future – for a short period of time, there was no one to tell them what to do (Sparks, 2001, pg 22).

Fourthly, this time of vacuity was soon replaced by the influences of a changing economic reality, which henceforth came to dominate the media’s agenda –as mentioned above – and positively affected the media’s critical output.

Additionally, in both countries media liberalization came due to a conundrum that the reform elites were increasingly facing: how could they authentically claim to be pursuing the aim of a truly democratic socialist system, without at the same time allowing freedom of speech and media independence?

This dissertation has therefore portrayed in the preceding chapters that in both countries of research the precondition for the official media to assume an active and positive role in the transition process was an easing of political control over the media, whilst acknowledging that the forms of transition in both instances differed. Furthermore, in both cases the media were the first to notice a retreat of the regime. In both cases reform minded (softline) members of the regime, began to directly instruct their media to begin a more critical reporting and to support the calls for reform. This came first and more strongly in the Hungarian case, but also became visible in the GDR after the resignation of Honecker and due to the increasing opposition of the block-parties and their media. Additionally, comments by reform forces printed in the newspapers paved the way for certain topics to become politically “acceptable”, topics that the media could subsequently pick up on. Part of the reason why the softline forces allowed a media liberalization arose out of attempts by these forces to instrumentalize the media in order to portray themselves as modernising mavericks, attempting to erect a truly democratic socialist system.

It is important to note, that in both instances the instructions by reform communists only went insofar as to de-legitimise the hardliners and to demand further reforms, while supporting the softliners attempting to portray themselves as reformers. In the case of the GDR further critical reporting was instructed by the “block-parties” over their own media en face of the increasing emancipation of these parties vis-à-vis the SED. This reporting was to criticise the SED per se, and to foster discussion on the transformation towards a democratic, multi-party system.

In both cases therefore, the initial “freedom” of the media to begin a more critical, balanced reporting, breaking on previous taboos, came as a result of regime divisions. In both countries the emerging confrontation between party hard- and softliners, as well as the increasing capability of the softliners to sideline the former, led to a power vacuum that could be exploited by the journalists. As a result the media workers suddenly felt “masterless” and uncontrolled.

Once the initial liberalization measures were introduced, in both cases the regime lost control through the mobilizing effects this had, and the regimes were thus forced more into

retreat. Thus, the loss of political and state powers of the regime largely contributed to the further loosening of control over the media, which subsequently began a content output that would have been unthinkable hitherto.

In both the GDR and Hungary a “plurality of opinions” in the media became apparent before this occurred in other sectors of society. This came as the media *nomeklatura* had direct access to the politburo members and noticed changes before these became evident to the rest of society. Additionally, as the media had always been under tight control of the party leadership, once this leadership was no longer able to or wanted to exert their influence on the everyday work of the media, the vacuum mentioned above became apparent in both countries. This vacuum in both countries allowed the media *nomeklatura* and also the lower-rank-and file journalists to act more independently.

In the entire soviet bloc telling the truth required courage and brought apprehensive consequences. Although individual journalists sometimes attempted to broaden their scope of actions, and although many opposed the system at times either through “messages between the lines” or directly (which mostly brought serious consequences), overall the media system only came to oppose the regime once these had already initiated a liberalization, and once the consequences no longer seemed as fearful. In both countries, however, although this only occurred after the first cracks had become visible, the increased independence of the media system vis-à-vis the regime occurred while the one party system was still in place, while the possibility of a reversal of the liberal policy still existed. In this, after the first liberalization policies of the regime were introduced, an interplay - between the increasing liberties given by the regime on the one hand, and the increasingly positive role of the media in fostering more changes to occur on the other hand - began; the more the regime was in retreat, the more the media developed as an independent critical actor, the more the regime lost further control.

Furthermore, the moment the reform forces of the elites set out to (re)-gain credibility in the eyes of the people, as soon as they engaged in talk with societal/opposition groups and organizations, as they stated their aim of erecting a truly democratic socialism, the door was swung open for the journalists to follow their own agenda and to speak freely. At this point the limited “controlled” liberalization gave way to a media liberalization, which could no longer be controlled by the regime. In this, the media indeed began to act as a watchdog, discussing shortcomings in the reform process, uncovering “scandals” and making the opposition forces, their ideas and aims public.

While the reasons for the media liberalization differed in each respective country, the outcome was very much similar: a media beginning to assume the role attributed to the media in democracies, it being that of a fourth estate. Nonetheless, the extent of this differed among the respective media, as will still be discussed later on in this chapter.

Hence, despite the different modes of transition in comparison between the GDR and Hungary, similarities do exist. The media in both countries were the first to witness a shift in the political reality. This occurred in different times and in different ways, nonetheless, the outcomes were very much the same. In both instances a vacuum was created that enabled the journalists to be “free to express themselves, to pursue their own interests, to tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future” (Sparks, 2001, pg 23). It is important to note, that most of the journalists in both cases were not anti-communists, but instead –at least initially - envisaged a form of “communism with a human face” as viable alternative to simply acquiring western market capitalism. This differed slightly in the CDU media, where the party put pressure on their respective media to support their political aims.

Overall, following similar roles in the emerging democratization processes for the media could be identified. Again these are divided into an “output” and an “outcome” analysis.

### **1. “Output”**

1. The newspapers of both countries sent a clear signal that changes were coming, that the regime was in retreat. This came in form of commentaries, or articles by regime members articulating regime divisions, or simply by “witnessing” and articulating the events occurring.
2. The media made political scandals of the past but also of the present public.
3. The newspapers of both countries became a platform for the developing opposition groups, such as the “Neues Forum” or “Group 20” in the GDR, in Hungary groups such as the SZDSZ or FIDESZ, in which the formations of these were covered and in which these received the possibility to articulate and publicize their demands, programmes and people.
4. In both countries the media began to cover issues previously “taboo” and issues simply not discussed. Although this varied in degree and reason, by addressing these issues, the media intended to assume an “agenda-setting” function or simply offered a platform for societal forces to address these issues in the newspaper and thus in public.



5. In both cases, the papers began to address issues important to society and relevant for a successful transformation process. These included in particular questions relating to a transition towards a market economy, including issues such as what to do with public property and privatization measures.
6. The media in both countries began to address the issue of the communists' constitutional leading role as well as the establishment of truly democratic control mechanisms. In the GDR, both opposition groups but also the "block parties" soon began to address the issue of the SED's leading role. In Hungary too, opposition forces soon began to discuss the issue of the party's leading role, addressing the need of democratic control of party financing or following the "Dunagate" scandal, of mechanisms controlling the misuse of power.
7. In both instances the media began to demand reforms towards an inner-party democratization process of the respective communist parties (in the case of the GDR also of the block-parties).

## 2. "Outcome"

1. The signals transmitted in the media that finally changes were occurring, exposing that the regime was both split up and in retreat, had an enormous mobilization influence, as the people were beginning to realize that more change and further liberalization were both possible and within reach. This is supported by the interviews for this dissertation, for example with Siegfried Reiprich (Interview, 20.5.2008) in the GDR, and Dr. Miklós Sükösd (Interview, 18.2.2008) in Hungary. Furthermore, the signals de-legitimised the respective communist party, as it exposed just how unable the party still was to control the media or to avoid the establishment and empowerment of a truly democratic media (Sükösd, 2000).
2. As to the making of scandals of the past and the present public, this not only increased the internal democratization processes of the parties in question by giving grass root members more reasons to demand inner-party control mechanisms, but it also fostered an erosion of popular support for even the reform-orientated communists. In the GDR issues such as the reporting on the housing estate of "Wandlitz" greatly increased public resentment against Krenz (Interview Bötcher, 19.3.2008), even though the aim of the reporting was different. In Hungary, the "Dunagate" scandal enormously discredited the reform forces (Interview Kiszelly, 14.2.2008) and their attempt to distance themselves from the old regime before the general elections.

3. By becoming a platform for the emerging opposition groups, the media coverage in both countries helped to rescue the opposition from a small and relatively closed “intellectual ghetto” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 145). In both cases the mentioning of the opposition groups brought them into “public existence” (Interview Reiprich, 20.5.2008), which symbolized an enormous psychological victory. Although some opposition members were known to the public in Hungary (such as Árpád Göncz of the SZDSZ, later the first President of the new republic) others such as the newly formed FIDESZ and its leader Viktor Orbán were not. This was also the case in the GDR. The Neues Forum, which came to be one of the biggest opposition groups, and hoped to become the GDR's equivalent to the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, had only formed in September 1989. Although by December around a dozen more opposition groups had joined the church organizations, the “Neues Forum” and the five parties from the former block parties during the second round table meeting, its leaders still remained largely unknown. This increasingly changed as the opposition groups and leaders were mentioned in the papers or even received a platform in these. This is supported by the interviews, in particular with Siegfried Reiprich (Interview, 20.5.2008) and Arnold Vaatz (Interview, 7.5.2008) in the GDR or Miklós Sükösd (Interview, 18.2.2008) and Tamás Deutsch-Für (Interview, 15.2.2008) in Hungary. Furthermore, as suggested by Sükösd, by presenting a new generation of leaders to the public, the media supported a “personalization” of politics in a positive sense of introducing up till then unknown individuals to the masses, linking people to parties, programmes, policies and statements (Sükösd, 2000).
4. By beginning to address topics previously taboo, both respective media, either through an “agenda-setting function” through own commentaries and articles or by becoming a platform for societal forces and reform regime members articulating these, indeed came to define important societal discussions on important issues. In Hungary the media coverage on “parcel 301” largely fostered a societal discussion on the remains of Imre Nagy and thus on the events of 1956 (Interview Deutsch-Für, 15.2.2008). In the GDR, a similar role is confirmed by the interviews with Arnold Vaatz (7.5.2008) and Siegfried Reiprich (20.5.2008). In both cases these also involved questions relating to the transformation towards a market economy, or crimes conducted since 1945 as a result of the communist imposition of power.
5. By beginning to address issues relevant for the successful transition process, the media largely supported the development of a new political socialization (Péter Bajomi-Lázár, 2001), by transmitting the norms of the pluralistic western democracies, they changed the political culture of the respective countries. Thus, during the transition processes the media played a crucial role in spreading

democratic values, views and aptitudes. As argued by Sükösd “both abstract democratic concepts and the everyday procedures and the reality of pluralist democracy were presented to audiences” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 149). Additionally, by informing people on the concepts of the market economy and by informing the readers on market economy terminology, they helped the readers in finding their way in the post-communist systems. These included help as to where one could receive financial support to start up an own business, or questions relating to the rights of the people in the upcoming elections and how the election procedure will take place. The research for this dissertation suggests that these articles proved tremendously helpful, as many of the citizens had never witnessed free elections, a working democracy or a free market economy. Practically overnight, many had to become used to concepts such as insurances, new banking systems etc. Furthermore, the media set the agenda for issues which were to become important to society on the whole: in Hungary environmental issues were raised by articles on the water barrage Bös-Nagymaros (although the intent was not entirely to foster an environmental discussion); in the GDR the issue of right-wing tendencies inside East-Germany was raised. This had been a taboo topic and had officially not existed in the GDR up to then, but it came to be a real problem for the unified Germany and to dominate societal discussion until today.

6. Interview partners for this dissertation including Dr. Zoltán Szabó (Interview, 19.2.2008) in Hungary and Arnold Vaatz (Interview, 7.5.200) in the GDR, suggest, that the demands in the newspapers to end the leading role of the respective communist party, as well as the demands to introduce real democratic control mechanisms (demands often even articulated by party members), placed great pressure on the respective regimes. How could they authentically argue to want a truly democratic society built up on socialist values, without allowing these changes from taking place? How could they promise an end to the misuse of power from the past, without allowing truly democratic bodies from controlling the work of the government?
7. The interviews also suggest that in both cases the media employees (in both cases mainly consisting of softline communists or moderate opposition members) with their remarks enormously fostered an inner democratization process of the communist parties in question. In the case of the GDR, as suggested by Arnold Vaatz (Interview Vaatz, 7.5.2008), additionally the block-party media largely initiated an inner-CDU democratization process. By allowing a discussion on the need of inner-party reforms and by even demanding these, the newspapers supported demands by softline party members in this direction. Additionally, the

papers began to assume a watchdog function, making public should the party leadership not implement the reforms promised.

The *democratic agenda setting function* was an especially important role for the media in both countries of research, where crucial issues had completely evaded public discussion for several decades. As argued by Sükösd “when combined with the public’s hunger for information about these topics, the media’s ability to fill this vacuum meant that their agenda-setting role was much more pronounced and sharply evident than it is in established democracies, where such topics are covered regularly. By expanding their scope of news coverage and opinion pieces to cover hitherto taboo topics, the media contributed to the setting of an open-ended, democratic, and pluralist political agenda. Moreover, it was an agenda that helped the opposition forces, partly because it largely overlapped with their reform agenda and partly because many of the issues on this agenda could be viewed as valence issues overwhelmingly favourable to them” (Sükösd, 2000, pg 144). Although this role became apparent in both countries of research, it changed during the time of analysis as a result of the elections in 1990. In the GDR it could be observed that the „Neue Zeit“ assumed the “agenda-setting” role as of October 1989, only to begin moving towards becoming more strongly the mouthpiece of the GDR-CDU by February 1990 (in their aim to advocate the transition towards a market economy and unification with the FRG). As to the „Neues Deutschland“, the „democratic agenda function“ only existed insofar as it reflected the position of the SED (later SED-PDS), it being to foster the continuation of the GDR on the basis of a truly democratic socialism, against the idea of an economic and political unification with the West. In Hungary, the dissertation findings suggest that the „democratic agenda setting“ function increased continuously between January 1989 to March 1990, indeed by November 1989 the political influences on the papers of research appear to have been smaller than was the case in the GDR. This, however, also varied from paper to paper, the „Népszabadság“ remaining the party paper never being quite as balanced, as was the „Magyar Nemzet“.

Bennet (1998) argues two important roles the media play in transformation processes. The first is the “witness role” and the second the “reifying or confirming role”. The “witness role” is the process of making public the various transformations that are taking place in all aspects of society, as the old regime starts to loose its grip on power. The “reifying role” verifies and legitimates the changes taking place by presenting a variety of images and information that coincide with one another, which in effect makes the shift in society seem “real”. Indeed, this is also what occurred in the two countries of research. The content analysis as well as the interviews for this dissertation suggest that the media in both

countries did indeed begin making public the changes in society as well as the increasing loss of control and power of the regime (including divisions within the regime softline and hardline fractions). Furthermore, the media (to varying degrees) indeed did provide different images and information on what was happening (either through own commentaries or by becoming a platform for various people and groups), by offering information on which possibilities existed (including the pros and cons of these), by informing on events occurring as well as by presenting the different political and social views, programmes and aims of the relevant political forces. By bearing witness of the changes occurring, the media made public that the emperor was “wearing no clothes”.

In the formation of mass mobilization resulting from the initiated liberalization measures, the findings of this dissertation suggests that the media played a pivotal role, fostering this process. Apart from signalling that the first cracks in the system had arisen, that control of the regime over society was easing, it mobilised parts of the opposition that had remained calm up to then fearing reprisals; now that the control willingness or ableness of the regime appeared lowered as suggested by the media’s output, these now began to voice their criticisms more fervently. By channelling information about alternative groups and parties to the citizens, the media not only brought these into “public existence”, but also mobilised and enabled the voters to make a balanced judgement on who to vote for during the first free elections for most people in both countries.

While initially the softline regime members had hoped to emerge from the elections as dominant forces, the events of 1989, the scandals uncovered and above all the articulation of what alternatives existed, were all factors that led to the victory of democratic forces during the March 1990 elections. The de-legitimation of even the reform forces was greatly fostered by the media, as critical issues regarding mismanagement, corruption as well as the continued misuse of powers were being made public. Furthermore, the publication of calls for events and demonstrations of the opposition made possible that the people found out about these and could participate. In Hungary this mobilised the masses in 1989 for the funeral ceremony of Imre Nagy (Sükösd, 2000). Arnold Vaatz argued during the interview for this dissertation (Interview, 7.5.2008) that in the GDR – in that particular case in Dresden - it gave the opposition group “Gruppe 20” the logistical power to make public their demands and to mobilise for public support and for their events and demonstrations. While surely previously the Western Media had served as dominant point of orientation for the East-German citizens, in the final month before the 1990 elections so much was happening so quickly, that the western media simply did not have the infrastructure to make public all events. Hence, increasingly the GDR media landscape assumed this role,

making public demonstrations, gatherings and oppositional demands even from the smaller groups.

As one needs to keep in mind that every transition is in a very real sense unique, the issues of democratization in the GDR were sometimes markedly different to the issues present in Hungary. Therefore, some positive attempts by the respective media to support the developing process must naturally differ. These main differing roles of the respective media included in the case of the GDR the question of unification with the FRG or the question of compensation and ownership of property by FRG citizens expropriated by the communists. In the case of Hungary these issues included a symbolic requisition of the national past and democratic traditions by the new democratic parties. To these included calls for an end to the soviet military presence as well as the coverage of the reburial of Imre Nagy, the March 15<sup>th</sup> gathering as well as the October 23<sup>rd</sup> demonstrations commemorating the 1956 events. With hindsight, this requisition of the national past led to a rather problematic nationalistic tendency on part of many citizens and politicians.

In both countries of research it is important to differentiate between the media as an institution as such and the individual journalists. While the media *de jure* remained state controlled (until the respective privatizations and the thus resulting commercialization occurred), the journalists in charge by the later part of 1989, mostly consisting of either reform communists or moderate opposition members, already began to foster a democratization of the system, while officially the state was still controlled by one party.

The media system in both countries were thus regarded by the public as being part of the regime; and in both countries since 1945 the media had been used as a tool to propagandise the regime's stance. As such, any changes in the way the media reported was seen as a mirror on what was happening on the political level. In this the media being part of the regime could send important signals to the public that a first split in the inner consistency of the regime had arisen as well as to what extent these divisions went. Furthermore, this made certain topics "acceptable" which in turn had a snowballing effect bringing issues into public discussion that would have been unthinkable hitherto. The fact that organizations previously strictly controlled by the regime were now increasingly asserting their independence, not only had a mobilising effect on the rest of society, signalling that further change were both possible and within reach. If a part of the regime could begin to demand change, why could ordinary citizens not do so too? But it also made apparent that change has come insofar that the respective parties no longer could or wanted to maintain full control over these organizations.

The journalists on the other hand, became actors in telling to truth as they saw it and in propagandising for their idea of the future; by offering the media to develop into a place of diverse discussion, where different voices could be heard, and where issues important for the transformation process were articulated. As soon as they began offering a different picture to that portrayed by the regime, this directly opposed the existing status quo. This came in form of uncovering political “scandals”, own commentaries writing on the events unfolding or on how they thought the country should proceed politically and economically, quoting opposition members, or simply by allowing the opposition groups direct access to voice their positions in the media. To be sure, the journalists boosted many of the factors relating to the role of the media, particularly in making obvious that the regime no longer did or could censor its media system.

Thus, both were important in portraying just “how naked the emperor really was” and what alternatives existed; acting as a catalyst for the further power erosion of the respective regimes and hence for further change.

It has previously been addressed that the independent and positive role of the respective media differed in its extent. This goes for the media in a country-to-country comparison but also in an inner-country comparison. The media in Hungary – even the official organ of the communist party – was considerably more independent from political forces than were the GDR media, and remained so until the elections of 1990. Again, this arose out of different conditions surrounding the respective media. The “Népszabadság” although supporting the MSZP (especially during the immediate election time), did become more balanced in its reporting than did the “Neues Deutschland”. While the “Magyar Nemzet” was also the mouthpiece of the popular front groups, it seems that it broke free from the influences of reform forces within the regime particularly Pozsgay (as identified in the chapter “Media in Transition”) at the end of 1989, becoming more independent to support re-founded or newly founded political parties. The “Neue Zeit” remained the mouthpiece of the attempts by the CDU to position herself for the coming elections. This became stronger as the elections were coming closer. Furthermore, that she became a platform for the emerging opposition in the GDR arose to a large extent as the journalists themselves were softline CDU members (fostering an inner CDU democratization process), but also because these opposition groups often had shared issues in common with the CDU.

Although the media landscape in Hungary does seem more balanced, critical and independent to its GDR counterpart per se, in an inner country comparison, both the “Neue

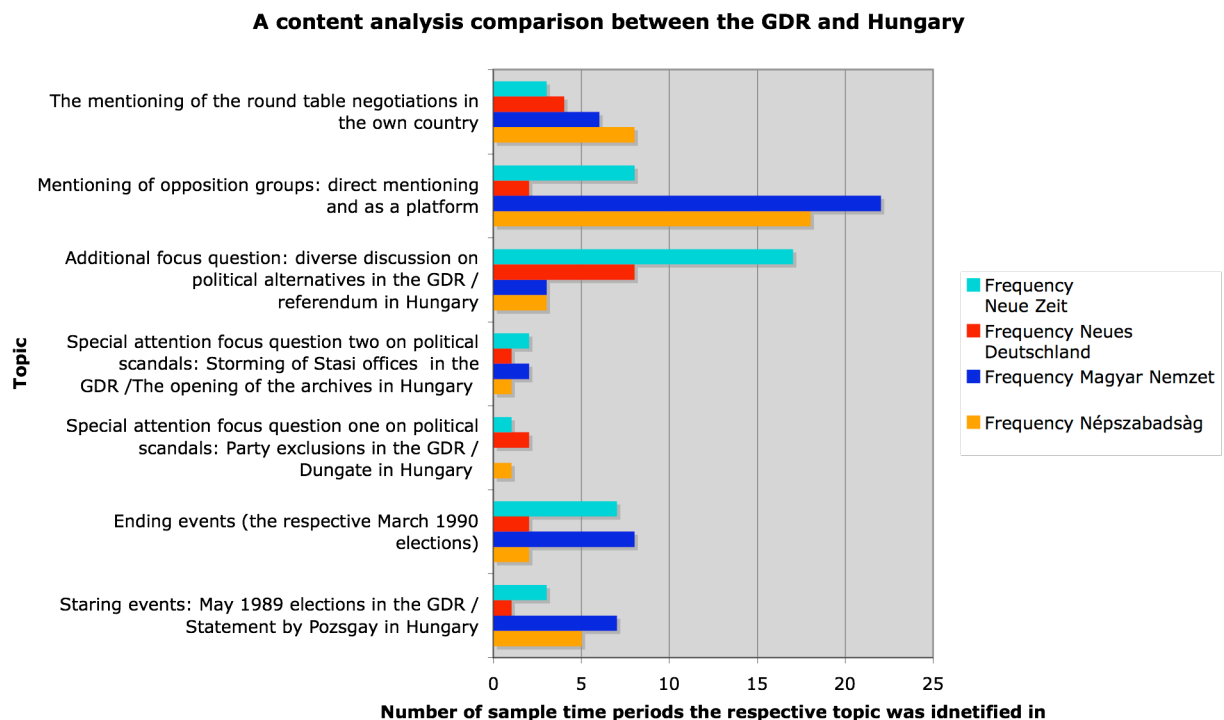
Zeit” and the “Magyar Nemzet” appear considerably more independent and critical than did the “Neues Deutschland” or the “Népszabadság”. This has much to do with the simple fact that both latter papers remained the organ of the party until the very end, and that in both papers the *nomenklatura* consisted of people believing either in a “third way” or in the continuation of the status quo (this then changed in both papers by the later part of 1989 insofar that the hardliners lost most authority also in the papers, which left “softliners” in control who nonetheless - although not wanting a continuation of the status quo -believed in the need of the continuation of a socialist system).

As for the GDR, the “Neues Deutschland” was one dominant force in uncovering mistakes of the past and in fostering an inner SED democratization process. However, the form of reporting always appeared rather one sided, raising fear of a unification with the FRG, warning of the negative consequences of this for Germany and especially Europe on the whole. While it did increasingly foster a continual erosion of legitimacy of the old guard vis-à-vis both grass root party members but also the population (the latter sometimes arising unintended as through the reporting on the “Wandlitz” housing estate), the underlining message remained to give a reformed SED a second chance. (The bar graphs below illustrate this well). As such, it called for the continuation of an independent GDR on the basis of a truly democratic socialist system; one in which only a socialist party could guarantee a successful long-term future. As to this point, the “Népszabadság” in Hungary played a similar role. Although it did become more balanced in its reporting in comparison to the “Neues Deutschland” as the previous chapters have suggested, the comparison between the “Népszabadság” and the “Magyar Nemzet” suggests, that the former was nonetheless by far not as fervently critical and balanced as was the latter. This was especially the case when it came to giving opposition groups a platform as the bar graphs below suggest. Important was that both the “Neues Deutschland” and the “Népszabadság” moved more closely in line with the positions of regime party as the elections of March 1990 drew closer. The “Magyar Nemzet” it appears was the most independent (among the newspapers of analysis) from political forces by the end of 1989 / the beginning of 1990. The findings of the content analysis and the interviews do show that although it was by far not completely free from political pressures (as the inexistent articles on the “Dunagate” scandal suggest), nonetheless, it was considerably more independent than the other newspapers of research.

The bar graph below depicts a content analysis comparison (for the entire research time of each country) between all newspapers of analysis regarding the main focus questions plus

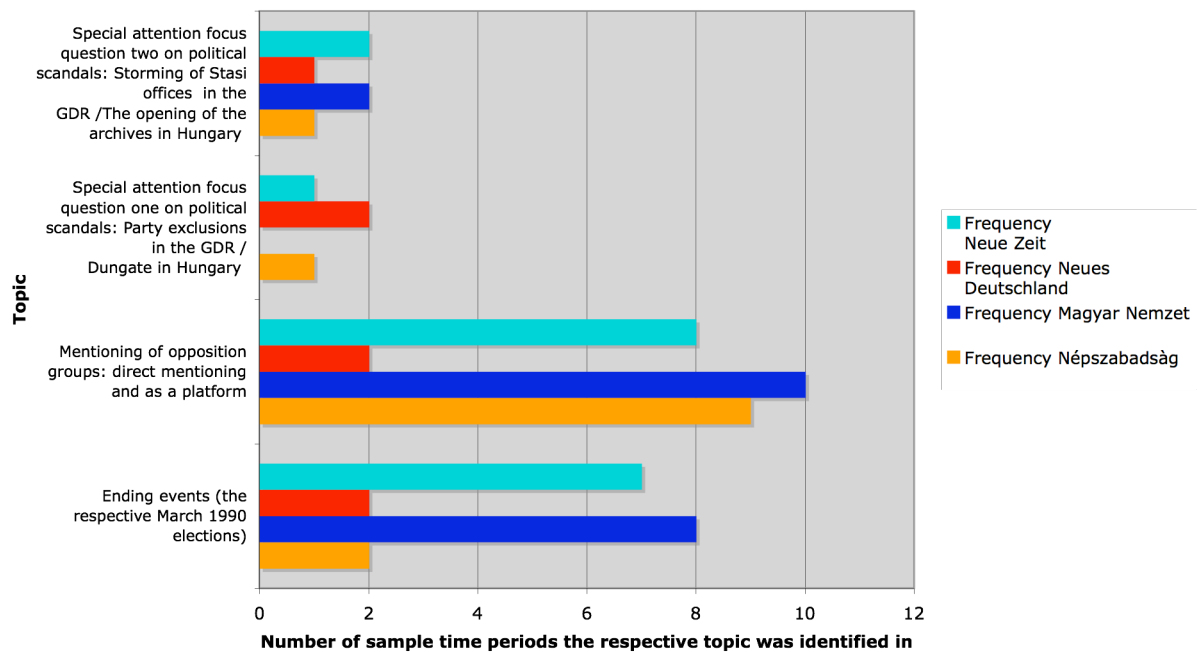


the issue to what extent the respective newspaper became a platform for or simply mentioned the opposition groups; their formations, programmes, peoples and demands.



The graph clearly shows that the respective topics were usually mentioned more often in the Hungarian newspapers and there in the “Magyar Nemzet”. One needs to keep in mind, however, that this is not entirely surprising considering the circumstance that in Hungary the political liberalization had begun considerable earlier. The bar graph below, comparing the relevant issues after political liberalization had also begun in the GDR - therefore as of October 1989 – suggests a slightly different picture.

### A content analysis comparison between the GDR and Hungary as of October 1989



Here one sees that once an easing of political control had also taken place in the GDR, the media in the GDR began to assume a similar role as the media in Hungary. The bar graph depicts well the inner country and country-to-country comparison mentioned above. As to the mentioning of opposition groups or becoming a platform for these, the Hungarian media landscape was undoubtedly ahead. However, in both instances, the respective “reform orientated” newspapers of each country was ahead of the respective “party organ”. In both countries the “reform” newspapers championed on reporting on the March 1990 elections, while the party organs did so less. The special attention focus questions also supports the previously described. In Hungary it suggests that although the media was overall more critical and balanced than in the GDR, the respective newspapers of research were by far not completely free from political / ideological constraints (as suggested by the non-existence of the “Dunagate” scandal in the “Magyar Nemzet”). In the GDR, the graph suggests that the issues that were covered by the two respective newspapers greatly differed: while the “Neue Zeit” concentrated on current issues including giving the oppositional groups a platform, the “Neues Deutschland” concentrated more on the mistakes of the past.

## VII. Conclusions and further comments

### The media as a “motor of change”?

When analysing democratization processes, even more so when comparing these with one another, one needs to keep in mind that every transition is genuinely distinctive. Having said that, all successful attempts to foster transition appear to be characterized by a particular combination of factors. As identified, one is the question of elites, their attitudes and their claims to power and exertion of effective rule. Likewise important seems to be the growth of individual societal forces that recognise the changed political situation early on.

Chapters 4 + 5 have illustrated that both countries of research represent two different modes of socialism since its respective imposition at the end of the 1940s. This also had an effect on the role of the media system in both countries of research by 1989, where the respective system's independence and thus resulting credibility among the own population also differed considerably. It has been portrayed that the media in the GDR was seen as an extended arm of the regime until 1989, voicing no real opposition bar some exceptions. The media in Hungary, in contrast, enjoyed considerable credibility by 1989, a circumstance stemming from the overall more liberalized position of the media system and the fact that many reform communists that had been involved in the 1956 events had returned as media *nomenklatura* members following the amnesty of the 1960s.

The hypothesis for this dissertation had presumed that where the media were able to play a relatively independent role from the outset of the democratization process, the media could contribute positively to the process, acting as a catalyst and exponent of change, offering a platform for discussion and thus fostering alternative views and critical debate. While acknowledging that a liberalization of the respective regimes had to be present beforehand, this dissertation assumed that the greater the liberties of the media at the outset of the transition process, the greater the speed and success of the democratization process. The findings of this dissertation indeed suggest that this hypothesis holds true. Thus, in neither the GDR nor in Hungary, had the media forced about the “liberalization” phase. Rather, the “liberalization” phase already had to be initiated by the regime, before the media further supported the emerging transformation process.

The dissertation has outlined that the media in both countries were the first to witness a shift in the political reality. In the Hungarian case, this change had largely been instigated by a reformist elite initiating change from above. In the case of the GDR, political change

came as a result of popular unrest, which brought softliners to power who agreed to a limited liberalization on the one hand, and who were simply no longer able to prevent it on the other. Here media liberalization only began in the final months of 1989. In Hungary, transition came a considerable time before it occurred in the GDR, the first reform measures – both politically and economically – dating back to the 1960s and receiving a stark boost in 1988.

Nonetheless, the findings of this dissertation have portrayed that the outcomes of the role of the media during the immediate transition phases were very much the same. In both instances, following an easing of the political control willingness and/or ableness of the respective regimes, a vacuum was created that enabled the journalists to be “free to express themselves, to pursue their own interests, to tell the truth as they see it, or to propagandise for their idea of the future” (Sparks, 2001, pg 23)

In order to analyse the role of the respective media in the democratization process, the research analysis had been divided into an “output” (journalists / media intent) and an “outcome” (effect on the process) examination. This was done in order to analyse in a first step whether indeed the media and the journalists began to cover issues that supported the democratization process in principle, and then to evaluate to what extent this intent did in fact have a positive influence on the process. The intention was that both should shed light into the question of whether the media in Central and Eastern Europe led or followed the democratization processes.

In a first step (the “output” analysis) the dissertation portrayed that in both countries as soon as the “liberalization” phase was initiated, the media quickly emerged as a witness to the events unfolding, making public the various transformations that were taking place in all aspects of society, as the old regime began to loose its grip on power. Additionally, the media (to varying degrees) assumed the role of an “agenda-setter”, beginning to become a forum for the addressing of previous taboos (either themselves or as a platform for opposition and softline regime members) as well as for issues relevant for society and the successful transformation process. Thus, an intent of the media to positively influence the developing democratization process could be identified.

In a second step (the “outcome” analysis) this dissertation revealed that the media did indeed have a positive effect on the unfolding developments. The media began providing different images and information on what was happening, again either through own commentaries or by becoming a platform for various people and groups. This had an

enormous mobilization effect, not only as it provided and made possible a more balanced public discussion, but also because with it the people were beginning to realize that further liberalization was both possible and within reach. With their reporting the media brought the opposition into “public existence” and made sure that the public was informed on what was to become the first democratic elections for most people in both countries. With this, the media did in effect assume an “agenda-setting” role, not only on defining issues relevant for the successful transition process or by making public the opposition groups, people and programmes. But they also began to address issues that were to dominate public discussion sometimes until today.

It is important to note that this dissertation has portrayed that a difference existed between the role of the media as an institution and the role of the journalists. To return to the introductory sentence of this conclusion, the media’s role was predominately related to the question of the elites, their attitudes and their claims to power and exertion of effective rule. In this, the media made evident that changes were occurring before it had been clear to the rest of society; on the one hand they became the instruments of the softline regime members to make certain issues public, and on the other they suggested just how unable the regime still was to control the emergence of a critical media (thus in both the media signalled that changes were coming, that the regime was increasingly losing its grip on power).

The journalists began to support individual societal forces. In this, they made these forces public and began to cover issues that were also important to these. At the same time, they also made public issues important for the regime members; thus enabling the media to become a true forum for a societal dialogue representing a diverse range of views. It is important to highlight that although the journalists did allow the media to become a platform for both the regime and the opposition, they not merely settled with the role of making public the unfolding developments in the respective countries, but instead also began to actively voice their own ideas on how the future should look.

So what does this tell us about the role of the media in the transformation processes of Central and Eastern Europe? The methodical approach had argued that as the dissertation analyses two countries of the region that were most different regarding both the media system and model of state socialism (therefore following Przeworski/Teune’s „Most different Systems Design“), if the media in both countries end up with a similar role during the immediate time of transition (the “liberalization” and “democratization” phases), then one can actually argue that the media in the entire region of research assumed a

similar role during the same phases. And as the findings of this dissertation have portrayed that during the immediate time of change the media system in both countries had indeed assumed similar roles, one can therefore presume that this was also the case for all countries of the region. This was further supported by the fact that in both countries of research both respective newspapers (one the largest “reform” orientated paper, the other the party organ, and both therefore also following the “Most different Systems Design”) began a positive role on the emerging process, albeit out of different reasons, on different topics and to varying degrees.

The chapter on the level of research had identified four different positions in relation to the role of the media during the transformation process. It seems that the findings of this dissertation imply a mixture between position 1. The “*Media-supremist position*” as well as position 2. The “*democracy-supremist*” position. Only after the regime had already initiated liberalization measures, could the media emerge as an independent actor. Nonetheless, as this dissertation had portrayed, to argue that the media merely followed the democratization process would not be entirely fair either. Instead, one can conclude that during different phases, the media play different roles.

It is important to emphasise the argument made at the beginning of this dissertation, namely that the initiation of each phase does not necessarily assure the transition to political democracy. Here, the findings of the dissertation point to the conclusion that although the media may not have played a dominant role in the initiation of the “liberalization” phase, after that it was a “motor of further change”; assuring the successful completion of the “liberalization” phase as well as initiation and completion of the “democratization” phase. Therefore, once it had become clear that the regime was initiating liberalization measures or was forced to do so (representing position 2), the media quickly exploited the thus resulting time of power vacuity, and indeed became a force for “further change” (representing position 1). The media therefore represented one factor in ensuring that the „liberalization“ and the „institutionalization“ of democracy were not reversed at some point, or that a new authoritarian regime was installed instead.

Furthermore, the dissertation findings suggest that the respective role of the media was indeed influenced by other forces in society as also argued by position 2, particularly that of money. Here, one hypothesis of this dissertation seems to be confirmed, namely that a new economic working logic which the journalists and the entire media system had to increasingly adapt to while the single party state was still in power (albeit considerably weakened), came to dominate the topic choices of the respective media. As the party state

was no longer able to finance its media empire, making news became a commercial activity – a process the editorial offices had to adapt to. And indeed this appears to have happened in the GDR and Hungary. In both countries one can conclude that the privatization measures as well as the need to adapt to the new economic working mode, heavily influenced the media's output, making them more critical, bringing them to raise more relevant questions and largely fostering a transition towards a stronger investigative journalism. The new economic reality came to limit the leeway of the journalists to merely propagandise for their own ideas of the future (as stated above), but instead to offer a more balanced reporting, competing for the public's confidence.

There is no doubt that through the quantitative as well as qualitative spread of the internet as a dominant source of information, it has become increasingly more easy for underground *samizdat* information to spread. Be it in China or in Egypt, internet blogs have the capability of reaching millions of people quickly and efficiently. Nonetheless, the official print media still keep many of the roles as mentioned above. For a start, an increase in the regime critical "output" of the official media in any authoritarian regime – communist or capitalist – suggests some form of retreat on the side of the regime. Although this retreat may be of temporary nature, and the regime may yet reinstall its strict control, for a short moment it exposes just how unable the regime still is to control the media or to avoid the emergence and empowerment of a democratic media system. It suggests some form of regime divisions, usually as the softliners attempt to use the official media to initiate some form of change.

As suggested by the findings of this dissertation, the softline members of the regime usually allow a media liberalization to foster their ideas and to sideline the hardline forces, believing that they can retain control over the subsequent events as well the media system. However, as soon as the door is swung open, this dissertation has portrayed that the subsequent process receives an own dynamic, where the media increasingly become an independent actor fostering further change. As the "liberalization" phase is usually accompanied by some form of economic "liberalization", which results in a commercialization, the official media and the illegal and semi-illegal media begin a competition that usually positively affects the output quality of the official media. A similar process can be expected to be found in other totalitarian and dictatorial / semi-dictatorial systems.

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#### **Hungary:**

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Quantitative content analysis findings: GDR

Neues Deutschland																						
Neue Zeit																						
Year / Period							1989										1990					
	1 half 05	2 half 05	1 half 06	2 half 06	1 half 07	2 half 07	1 half 08	2 half 08	1 half 09	2 half 09	1 half 10	2 half 10	1 half 11	2 half 11	1 half 12	2 half 12	1 half 01	2 half 01	1 half 02	2 half 02	1 half 03	2 half 03
<b>Events</b>																						
Articles on the elections of May 1989	xx																					
Articles dealing with the May 1989 elections critically													x	x								
Articles demanding new election laws													x									
Articles on the elections of March 1990															x	x	x	x	xx	x	xx	
Positive articles on political transformations in Soviet bloc countries		x		x	xx				x							x	x	x	x			
Negative articles on political transformations in Soviet bloc countries		x		x						x												
Articles dealing with the need of renewal of society / new realities / reforms / the need of dialogue							x	x				xx	xx	xx	x	x	x					
Articles supporting state view of refugee problem								xx	x	xx	xx	x	x									
Balanced reporting on refugee problem													xx	xx	x	x		x				
State view of demonstrations inside the GDR											x											
Balanced or positive view of demonstrations											x	xx		x								
Border closure between the GDR and Czechoslovakia											xx											
Articles attacking current work of the SED leadership												x		x	xx		x					
Articles dealing with mistakes of the past												x	x	xx	x	x	x					
Articles dealing with the leading role of the SED													xx	xx	x							
Articles dealing with the leading role of the SED - criticising promised changes are in effect is not happening																	x					

Articles on Wandlitz														XX	XX						
Articles on the party exclusions of Honecker and Mielke															XX		X				
Articles dealing with the storming of Stasi offices															XX		X				
Stasi critical articles															X		X				
Articles on the misuse of powers and corruption by prominent SED members														XX	X	X	X				
Calls for new elections												X	X	XX							
Articles covering the round table negotiations in the GDR														XX	XX	XX	X				
Articles arguing for a "third way" instead of instant unification with the West														X	XX	X	X	X	X		
Articles on the SED- extraordinary party conference													XX	X	XX	X			X		
Articles calling to give a reformed SED a second chance														X	X						X
Different voices for and about economic reforms / no ADN or government releases											X	X	XX	XX	XX	X	XX	X	XX	XX	X
Articles dealing with right-wing tendencies inside the GDR												X			XX	XX	X				X
Introduction of / platform for oppositional groups and parties											X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Negative articles dealing with the possibility of unification with the FRG																X	X	X	X		
Neutral articles dealing with the possibility of a unification with the FRG																X	X	X	X	X	
Positive articles dealing with the possibility of a unification with the FRG																	X	X	X	X	
Articles offering diverse discussion on how to proceed politically																	XX	X	X		
Negative articles regarding the issue of a currency unification with the FRG																		X	X	X	X
Neutral articles on the issue of a currency unification																		X	X	X	X
Questions relating to the GDR's property expropriations and compensation for former owners																					X

## Appendix 2: Quantitative content analysis findings: Hungary

[illegible]

Articles on the coming of the multi-party system	x	x	x		xx		x			x					x				x	x							x			
Articles dealing with the dismantling of the barbed wire border between Hungary and Austria						x		xx							x												x			
Opening of the border with Austria										x		x		xx																
GDR refugees in the FRG embassy in Budapest								x				x	xx																	
GDR refugees in the FRG embassy in Prague														x	x	x														
Soviet troops leaving Hungary (demand)																														
Soviet troops leaving Hungary (statement of fact)						xx						xx										x	x	x						
Articles critical towards the party		x					x					x						x			x	x								
Articles on Imre Nagy		x			x			x	xx	x	x																			
Articles on Parcel 301			x		x			x						x																
Articles on the Water barrage "Bős-Nagymaros"				x	x	x		x	xx		x		x		xx			xx	xx	x	x									
Questions relating to party assets: both communist party assets as well as how the distribution of financial support for new parties should be regulated																											x	x		x
Events / reforms inside the GDR					x										x	xx	xx	x	xx	x	x	xx			x	x	x		x	
Renaming of communist party into the MSZP																	x		xx											
Articles discussing documents on the show court case of László Rajk		x	x	x	x																									